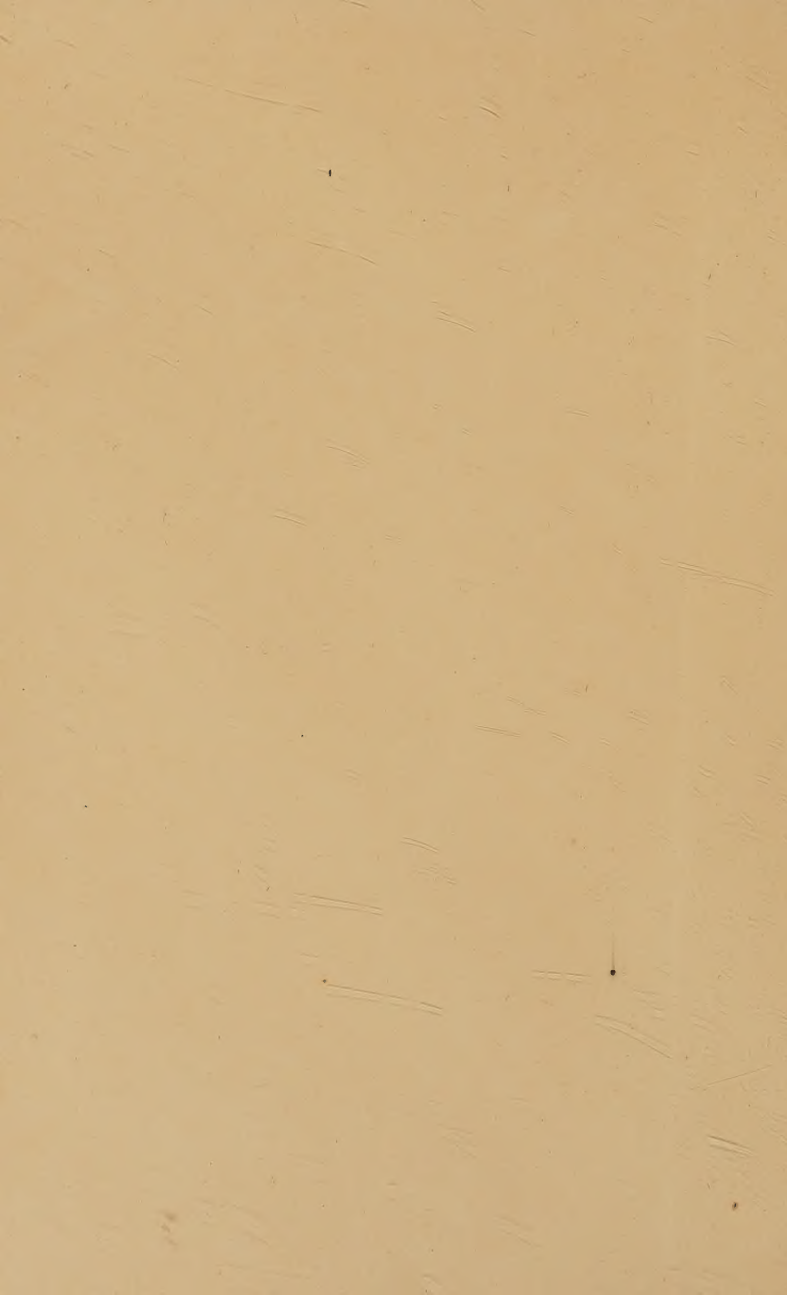
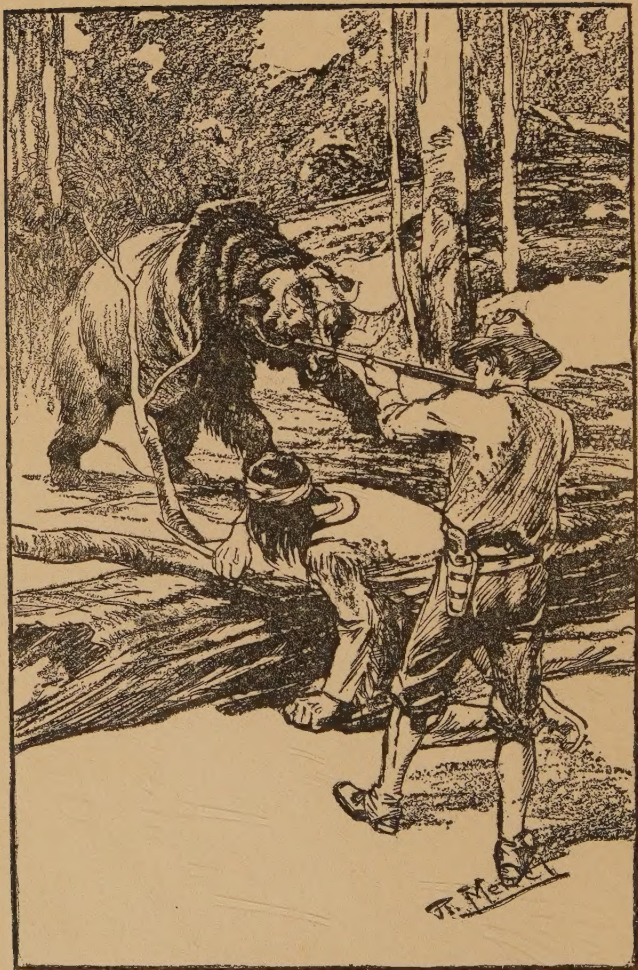


BOY SCOUTS

IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES







DONALD RAISED HIS RIFLE AND FIRED.

Canadian Rockies.

THE BOY SCOUTS IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

BY
RALPH VICTOR

Illustrated by
RUDOLF MENCL

New York
THE PLATT & PECK CO.

THE BOY SCOUTS

By RALPH VICTOR

The Boy Scout Movement has secured a hold on the American boy that is remarkable in its far-reaching effects. It is doing a great work in the development of manliness, self-confidence and physical perfection and is making better citizens out of the members of the organization.

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BOY SCOUTS IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

I

THE RUNAWAY

“**H**ELLO, what is it now! A fire or a fight?” exclaimed Jack Blake.

The speaker was standing with his chums, Dick Wilson and Gerald Moore, on a corner of the main street and near the railroad station. It was the afternoon following Thanksgiving Day and the boys, who were students at Highpoint Academy, were home for the holiday. They had just met on the corner when their attention was attracted by a commotion a short distance down the thoroughfare. There was a confused noise of shouting above which rose cries of warning that were taken up and carried along in increasing volume. Looking down the roadway they could see the people running wildly about while shouts of:

“Hey, there! Look out!” and “Get out of the way!” expressed in loud and agitated tones accompanied the sound of flying hoof-beats.

"Hold on!" shouted Gerald, as Jack was starting on a run for the scene of action. "It's a runaway and they are headed this way! Great Cæsar, look at them come!"

Emerging from a cloud of dust was seen a pair of big bay horses and at their heels a heavy truck piled with swaying boxes and bundles. The frightened animals came dashing along on a mad run that sent the people on the street scampering in a wild rush for safety.

Maddened by fear, with their heads up and the foam flying from their distended nostrils, the horses rushed blindly along in the direction of the Crescent Station, where a number of carriages and automobiles were standing. At the first note of warning, the owners or drivers began in hot haste to get their equipages and cars out of the way of the runaway team. There were also many women and children on the street who were in imminent danger of being run down, for a train had just arrived, and the passengers were coming from the station.

"Hey, stop them!" excitedly shouted a man standing in a safe position in a doorway, but making no move to do anything himself. There were many equally interested and equally inac-

tive onlookers. A few, however, were brave enough or sufficiently rash to make an attempt to catch, as they went by, at the horses' bridles, but it was only a half-hearted effort at most, for they recognized that a failure to hold them probably meant being crushed under the feet of the flying team or ground beneath the wheels of the wagon, and the horses bore rapidly down upon the people about the station.

"Look out, they're coming this way!" cried Gerald, when the horses swerved in toward the spot where the boys were standing, himself running back to get out of the way, but Jack, intent on catching all the details, stepped a little further forward, while Dick, more purposeful, set off on a run in the same direction the team was going.

"Hi, there," shouted Gerald. "What are you trying to do, Dick, run a race with them?"

Dick made no reply, but kept on at full speed, just keeping out of the way of the galloping horses, and then, as the wagon went by him, putting on an extra spurt, he caught hold of the tail board, to which he clung insecurely for a second or two. Then he began climbing into the wagon, holding fast to the risers as the

wagon pitched and bounced from one side to the other. Quickly he succeeded in gaining the top of the swaying, jolting load, across which he crawled, every moment in peril of being dislodged and thrown to the street. Finally he reached the driver's seat in front. Fortunately, the lines were within reach and these he grasped. Then bracing his feet, he took a strong steady pull upon the bits in the horses' mouths.

With a hard pull and a soothing, "Whoa, boys, whoa! Steady, now!" he gradually got control of the frightened horses, guiding them skillfully, slowing them down and calming them until he brought them to a trot and finally to a stop at a point almost in front of the station.

Jumping down from the seat, as ready hands caught the bridles of the smoking team, Dick sought to slip away unnoticed in the crowd, but was stopped by a tall, military looking man, who barred his progress.

"Bah Jove!" exclaimed the gentleman with a marked English accent. "That was the cleverest bit of work I've seen in the States, I'm sure. May I ask your name, me boy?"

"Oh, it wasn't anything," replied Dick evasively, and trying to edge by him.

"I can't agree with you on that, you know," said the gentleman, smiling. "I think it was quite worth while. Deuced clever bit of work, you know. I should really like to know your name."

"It's Dick Wilson," volunteered a man who was standing by, at the same time calling for three cheers for Dick Wilson, with a "Hip, hip, hurrah!" in which the stranger joined.

"Here is my card," the gentleman went on when the cheers were over, handing Dick a handsomely engraved card bearing the name Cecil Carleton. "I'm glad to make your acquaintance, Master Wilson, and I'm going to make a note of your name so I shan't forget it. If you ever get out to Western Canada, way out in the Indian country where I come from, be sure and look me up." Saying this, he offered his hand, which Dick, wanting no commendation for a duty done, rather reluctantly took.

"I certainly shall, if I ever get out there," said Dick, thinking at the time that his chances of ever seeing the stranger again were remote indeed. He added "Good-bý" to the interested Englishman as he turned away to join his companions, who had come up by this time.

"Who was the man who gave you his card?" asked Jack when they had ceased to discuss the runaway and had gone a little way down the street.

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied Dick. "He said he was from Canada, but he's English through and through. He may be the King of England for all I know."

"Or the Prince of Wales," said Gerald. "He looks like a big fish of some kind."

"Here is his pasteboard," went on Dick; "Mr. Cecil Carleton."

"Is that all?" said Jack. "He looks as though he might be a general or something."

"Particularly the something," commented Gerald.

"I wonder what he is doing in Creston?" mused Jack, who was always on the lookout for any item of news for the local paper published by his father.

"Scenting a story?" asked Dick.

"I don't know, I'm sure; but there is one thing I do know."

"And what is that?" asked Gerald.

"That I can beat you both to the club room."

"Show us!" cried Dick.

"Huh!" exclaimed Gerald, "you needn't try to put on any airs because you caught on to the tail end of the wagon. You are not the only one who can run in the town. Faith, me bhoy, Oi can give ye odds and bate ye."

"You can't beat me on an even start," retorted Dick.

"All right, we'll try it," returned Gerald. "Line up for a fair start. Now then," when they had got in line, "wait until I give the word. Are you all ready? Go!"

At the word each boy, drawing a long breath, was off in a flash down the street, dodging around the people on the thoroughfare, diving under astonished horses' heads, cutting corners and racing across lots and through by-ways until they arrived, panting and breathless, in a bunch, with perhaps Gerald a trifle in the lead, on the lawn in the front of Mr. Scott's residence, where the club room was.

The three boys, Gerald Moore, Dick Wilson and Jack Blake, with Pepper, his brother, Randolph Peyton and Donald Graeme, made up the Uncas Patrol of the Boy Scouts of America, which they had organized the previous Summer, as told in the first volume of the series—"The

Patrol"—wherein is also related the story of a mysterious robbery in Creston, which is unraveled by Jack, who puts two and two together. There is an exciting rescue of a young girl, Nellie Whilden, from an overturned canoe in the Hudson by the boys, which leads to the presentation by her father of a motor-cycle to each of them.

The boys start on the motor-cycles for a trip through the country, as told in the second volume of the series—"Boy Scouts Motor-Cycles." Through taking the right hand fork of the road instead of the left, at the outset of the journey, they become involved in a series of thrilling adventures which culminate in the capture of Jack by a band of moonshiners upon whose hiding place he had stumbled. Pepper, in a sudden emergency, was helpful to a young girl, Alice Royce, happily interfering when she is attacked by a vicious dog, and concerning these two the reader will learn more in this volume.

In return for their help in finding and restoring a stolen automobile the boys are presented with two handsome canoes, in which they decide to make a cruise along the Long Island shore. In volume three—"Boy Scouts Canoe Trip"—

the story of their outing is related. In this their adventures begin with Pepper and Dick getting lost in a heavy fog on the Sound. After paddling about they finally find their way to a light-house, where they render signal aid to the keeper. They also assist in an exciting chase and capture of some robbers and incidentally recover some papers which were stolen.

At the time of the formation of the Patrol Mr. Scott, Randolph Peyton's uncle, with whom he was living and who was a patron of the Boy Scouts, gave them the use of a room in the attic of his house for a club room, where the boys could meet whenever they felt so inclined.

"I wonder if Rand is anywhere around," remarked Jack as the three boys stood on the lawn in front of the house.

"What is the use of wondering when you have a mouth to ask questions," returned Gerald.

"I don't see anybody to ask," replied Jack. "One of those machines like the Pole down at the station house said he had, would come in handy now."

"What kind of a machine was that?" asked Dick.

"Why, the police picked up a man the other night who was building a fire inside of the Iron Works to warm himself. When they locked him up he began descanting on the merits of a machine that he had at home in Poland which would answer any question you would ask of it. It would tell you the population of Germany or how much money you had with you, or any one had in their pocket, or anything else you wanted to know."

"Gee, that would be handy," said Dick, "but there would be some difficulty in my case on the money question," showing his empty pockets.

"Faith, we don't need any machine here," put in Gerald, putting his fingers in his mouth and sending out in a loud, clear whistle,—the Uncas call. "That will bring him out if he is about."

The response was quick, for a moment later the door of the house was opened and Rand called to them to come in, adding:

"Don and Pepper are here."

CHAPTER II

A QUESTION IN SIMPLE ADDITION

“**H**ELLO, Jack,” cried Donald when Jack with Dick and Gerald came into the club room, where he and Pepper were found intently studying some papers spread out before them. “What have you got that is new and startling now?”

“Exciting runaway on Main street,” replied Jack, taking up a newspaper and with a pretense of reading the head lines. “Wild dash of frightened team with heavy truck through crowded thoroughfare. Perilous feat of quick-witted youth. What do you say to that?”

“Fine. But who was the hero?” asked Pepper.

Then whistling, “See the Conquering Hero Comes,” Gerald pushed Dick into the center of the room.

“Ladies and Gentlemen!” he began in an oratorical tone.

"Hurrah!" cried Pepper.

"But there are no ladies here," said Donald.

"The trouble with you, Don," retorted Gerald, "is that you lack imagination. Now, 'in my mind's eye, Horatio,' I can see a spacious hall filled with fair ladies and brave men and you can see nothing but this bare room. You are too practical. To you, 'A primrose on the river's brim, a yellow primrose is to him,' and it is nothing more."

"And what else would it be?" asked the practical Donald.

"A hopeless case," murmured Gerald, at which the others laughed. Donald was accustomed to these sallies and made no comment.

"Speech! Speech!" called Pepper. "Go on with the speech!"

"Esteemed fellow citizens," began Gerald, taking a fresh start, "behold the hero of the day!"

"Is that in your mind's eye, too?" asked Rand.

"No," responded Gerald, "that is a literal fact that even Don will not dispute."

"But what is it all about, anyhow?" demanded Donald.

Whereon Gerald told, not without embellishment, the story of Dick's feat in stopping the runaway team, and the latter was compelled to accept the compliments of his chums, deprecate as he would his venturesome act.

"Cecil Carleton," said Rand thoughtfully, after an interval. "Where have I heard that name? It seems to me that I have heard it somewhere. Why, I know, I've heard Uncle speak of him. He comes from the mining country of Canada. He's a friend of Colonel Snow's, I believe."

"That is it, of course," agreed Gerald. "We might have known that."

"That reminds me," broke in Jack.

"Now, Jack," protested Donald.

"Can't help it," laughed Jack. "I guess I caught it from Dick. You remember what the copy books used to have in them."

"Which particular item do you refer to?" asked Rand.

"Why, to the copy: 'Evil Communications corrupt good manners.'"

"I thought that was from the Bible," said Dick.

"So it is," returned Jack, "a long ways ' from

the Bible,' and that brings me to what I started to tell you. You remember the paper Rand found in the cabin of the *Polly* last Summer?"

"You mean that example in addition or multiplication?"

"That is it. You know that was one of the papers that was stolen from Judge Taylor's office," answered Jack.

"Sure, but what was the paper's purpose?" asked Donald.

"Well, it looked like a problem in addition," replied Jack, "but it really was the directions for finding that lost mine the Colonel told us about."

"That thing!" exclaimed Donald. "Why, 'twas just a jumble of figures. You c'ud no make head nor tail of that."

"You hit it that time, Don; but there must be a translation," replied Jack. "You see, it is in cipher. I saw Colonel Snow to-day and he says that he had been trying to make it out, but he came to the same conclusion that Don did, for he couldn't make any sense out of it, so he asked me to see what I could do with it."

"And I have no doubt ye made a story of it," commented Donald.

"What did you make of it?" asked Rand.

"I have spent considerable time on it," answered Jack, referring to the papers lying before him. "I made a copy of it, as you see, and brought it along. I thought we might all have a try at it."

"Good boy," said Dick. "Let's have a look at it," taking the paper from Jack and spreading it before him on a table. "It certainly is a tough proposition what ever way you look at it."

With which sage conclusion we think our readers will agree.

This was the example:

8, 112, 528, 182, 196, 624, 281, 511
 135, 868, 182, 148, 135, 581, 828, 181, 522
 822, 818, 111, 521, 314, 513, 142, 818, 214
 16, 813, 551, 811, 826, 921, 524, 511, 248
 86, 681, 881, 821, 416, 865, 620, 222
 2, 115, 222, 586, 102, 556, 162, 486, 142, 023

"Must be a pretty valuable mine," commented Gerald as he looked over the paper.

"What makes you think so?" asked Donald.

"Because the figures run up in the millions," replied Gerald.

"I thought the colonel had the key to it," remarked Rand.

"He has only a suggestion of a key and it doesn't seem to fit somehow," answered Jack. "He says Mr. Deane told him the last two figures were the key."

"The last two figures?" said Pepper. "That is twenty-three. Hey, Skedoo," at which the boys laughed. "Suppose we have a try at it," he added more seriously.

"How are you going to begin?" asked Dick.

"It is easy to begin," replied Jack. "The question is," he went on after a further study of the figures for a few moments, "how to progress, that is, apply the key."

"Twenty-three," mused Rand. "I suppose each of these figures represents a letter, but then that cannot be, for there are twenty-six letters and only nine digits."

"So that some letters have two figures and some only one," added Dick. "The more you study it the harder it gets."

"Then you had better go at it without studying," suggested Gerald.

"Bright boy, Gerald. You go to the head of the class," said Rand.

"Do you think he started to number the letters with the twenty-third?" asked Pepper.

"That might be one way," answered Dick. "We can try. Let's see," setting the alphabet down on a slip of paper. "W is the twenty-third letter. We will start with that and it will give us W-1, X-2, Y-3, Z-4, A-5, &c., &c."

"Now let us see how we will come out. Eight must be the first letter because there can't be an eighty-two. Eight would be D. Now the next may be one or eleven; if it was one it would be W, but that doesn't make sense so it must be eleven and that is g and the next two letters I find to be u and x."

"Dgux!" exclaimed Donald. "What is Dgux?"

"Nothing," interposed Jack. "You haven't got it yet. You are on the wrong track and must try some other way."

"I give it up," said Donald.

"'If at first you don't succeed,'" quoted Jack.

"Now, who can define 'success'?" asked Rand.

"I'm the goat," said Pepper. "What's the answer?"

"I read something like this the other day, and it struck me as O. K.," resumed Rand. "Success is attained not always in doing what you have at hand to do and doing it well but rather in doing your task *mighty quick and before any other fellow can.*"

"Good," cried Pepper. "and I don't mind taking a chance with you." Whereupon there was a set-to and a rough and tumble wrestle: the other boys as audience, till Rand was declared the victor.

"If there was a sign for each letter," pondered Jack, resuming his study of the paper. "we might puzzle it out."

"How would you do it in that case?" asked Dick.

"The old way was to take the most frequently recurring character as E for a starting point."

"Why E?" asked Donald.

"Because E is used more than other letters but still that doesn't always work out particularly in a short cipher."

"We might try it anyhow," suggested Pepper. "Which figure comes oftenest?"

"I think there are more twos than any

other," replied Dick. "I see thirty of them."

"I find there are forty-one ones," asserted Donald.

"But all the twos can't be E's," put in Gerald, "nor the ones either."

"Why not?" demanded Pepper.

"Because some of the letters must be twelve and some twenty-one as well as other combinations," replied Gerald.

"Then I don't see how we are ever going to get at it," deplored Donald.

"Oh, there are more ways than one," asserted Jack, who had been studying the figures. "I believe 'the' is the most frequently used word in the English language. Let us see if we cannot find some combination of figures that occur several times."

"The first thing to do," suggested Rand, "is for each one of us to take a copy of the figures so that we can all work at it."

"That's the idea," cried Gerald; "you call off the figures, Jack, and we will put them down. Give me a copy and I'll make something out of it, if it is only a fairy story."

"You would no be far wrong at that," commented Donald.

CHAPTER III

PUTTING TWO AND THREE TOGETHER

“**N**OW,” began Jack, when the boys had taken down all the figures, “the most frequently recurring combination that I find is, eight, one, eight, two; now we know it can’t be eighty-one and eighty-two so it must be eight, eighteen, two.”

“Then whenever we have an eight we can call it a T,” said Pepper.

“Not so fast,” corrected Rand, “for we have also eighteen, but if we have eight, eighteen and two for T, H, and E, we have a starting point. I will put down the letters and number them and see how we come out. Now, if T is eight and H is eighteen and two is E, perhaps we can find the clue somewhere.”

“Let us take the eights and perhaps we can find some other combination,” suggested Jack.

“Here is an eighty-six,” said Donald.

“What comes next?” asked Rand.

"Why eight, eighteen and two."

"Then eight must be T and there must be some other letter between the two T's."

"O," suggested Pepper.

"I guess you've hit it, Pepper, that would make 'to the.'"

"Then we can call six the letter 'O,'" said Jack. "Now we have four letters. Let us see if we can make any sense out of them and perhaps we can strike some more. Let us put the letters as far as we have them over the figures and see if we can spell any more words."

"Here is an eight, two sixes, an eight, and eighteen," announced Gerald.

"What does that spell?" asked Rand.

"T double o T H, tooth."

"Tooth!" ejaculated Donald. "What has a tooth got to do with it?"

"Don't know," replied Rand, "until we get some more."

"More teeth?" asked Gerald.

"More words," laughed Rand.

"Here is another one," called Dick. "Eight, two twos, eight and eighteen."

"What does that make?"

"Well, if the twos are E's it makes teeth."

"That the word you were looking for, Rand?" asked Gerald.

"No," answered Rand, "but still it makes sense."

"I can see no sense in it," declared Donald.

"Huh!" exclaimed Pepper, "I bet the fellow that got up this thing was a dentist."

There ensued a long interval of silent working on the part of all, except Donald, who unhesitatingly confessed that the thing was too much for him.

"Hurrah!" broke in Jack at last, "I've got it!"

"Got what, more teeth?" asked Gerald.

"No," replied Jack, who was still busily working on a slip of paper. "How is this?"

"We can tell better after we have heard it," returned Pepper.

"Take the moose trail to then till the three teeth are in line then w till hat covers last tooth then w to loupe creek to yellow stone."

"What does it mean?" cried Pepper.

"I don't understand it altogether," replied Jack, "but perhaps the Colonel will know."

"Are you sure you have got it right?" asked Rand, taking the paper and reading it over.

"Take the moose trail to then'; that doesn't sound just right, to *then*."

"Oh," suggested Dick, "I have it, 'n' stands for North."

"That's it, *to the North* — 'till the three teeth are in line.' But what does that mean?"

"Maybe they are mountain peaks that look like teeth," suggested Dick.

"Good boy, Dick," cried Gerald, giving Dick a slap on the back that nearly knocked him off his chair. "You can go up head."

"And hat means another peak I suppose," ventured Pepper.

"Of course," agreed Gerald, "it's just as easy as rolling off a log. All we have to do now is to follow the moose trail and be happy ever after in the true fairy story style."

"How did you get it, Jack?" asked Rand.

"Why, I just put two and two together," replied Jack.

"Where was the two and two?"

"Why, you know the Colonel said the key was in the last two figures," exclaimed Jack.

"But that was twenty-three," said Pepper, "and we tried that."

"No," corrected Jack, "it is two and three."

"What of that?" asked Rand.

"Why I numbered the alphabet by twos and threes," replied Jack.

"By two and threes!" cried Gerald. "It is too deep for me. Throw a little more light on it, Professor."

"Well," explained Jack. "I started counting at a so b was the second letter and I called that one and —"

"It gets worse and worse," murmured Gerald.

"Then I counted three and that brought me to E, and I marked that 2. We already had determined that 2 represented E," went on Jack; "then I counted two more and got for g number three and so on until I got them all."

"But I don't see, what did you do when you got to z?" asked Donald.

"Went back to a, and kept on counting again by two and threes, skipping the letters that were already numbered, until I had them complete."

"Jack, you're a genius," said Gerald. "but now that you've found the key to the mine's location, what about finding the owner?"

"I am afraid that is beyond me," laughed Jack; "perhaps some of you fellows can do it."

"Try it, Jack," urged Gerald; "you are our only reliance, but I don't know but I will have a try at it myself," a sudden inspiration coming to him. "What did you say her name was?"

"Why, the Colonel said her name was Ross, I think," answered Rand.

"And her first name was —"

"Alice," said Pepper.

"Shure 'tis not your swateheart's name Oi'm asking about," returned Gerald quizzically. "'Tis the name of Mrs. Ross I want."

"Pepper is right," put in Rand. "The Colonel said Mr. Deane told him the mine was for his daughter Alice."

"Alice Ross?" pondered Gerald; "Alice Ross," rolling the name over in his mouth like a sweet morsel. "Be the powers," he cried, springing to his feet with a whoop. "Did ye iver see such luck. Shure, Pepper, ye're not handsome bot ye must have a fairy god-mother."

"What is the matter now?" asked Rand.

"Don't you see it?" demanded Gerald, greatly excited.

"See it? See what?" demanded the others.

"Alice R o s s is Alice R o y c e. The names are spelled differently but by many pronounced the same."

"Well, what of that?" cried Rand.

"Why, Mrs. Royce, mother of Alice, is the owner of the mine."

"Now how do you make that out?" demanded Donald, still puzzled.

"Faith, I just put two and two together same as Jack does," replied Gerald.

"But I don't see anything in it," doubted Donald.

"Of course you don't," returned Gerald, "but it's as plain as a pikestaff. The Colonel was looking for a Mrs. *Ross* and of course he couldn't find her. You see he misunderstood the name."

"How do you know that?" asked Jack.

"Well, I don't know it," admitted Gerald, "but I guess it. I know that Mrs. Royce's name is Alice and that she came from Chicago."

"Huh!" said Pepper, "I guess there's lots of people whose names are Alice who came from Chicago."

"That's right, too, Pepper," admitted Gerald, "but I know too, that Mrs. Royce's father, Mr.

Deane, was up in the Canadian Rockies somewhere, and that is the last they have heard of him."

"There may be something in it," agreed Rand, "and it certainly will be easy enough now to find out."

"Shall we say anything to the Colonel about it?" asked Jack.

"Better wait until we are sure, I think," replied Rand. "You can give him the translation of the cipher and we will find out about Mrs. Royce. Say, but we have done an afternoon's work."

"Right you are," exclaimed Pepper, and right Rand was, as after revelations were to confirm.

"That reminds me," began Dick.

"That it is supper time," interposed Pepper, "and I'm off," picking up his hat and coat.

"The same thing struck me," added Jack, following his example.

"So say we all of us," sang Gerald. "Come along, Dick, you can tell it to me as we go along."

And a moment later the boys were on their way to their various homes.

CHAPTER IV

AN INVITATION

“OH it’s all around my hat, I will wear a green ribbon, all around my hat for twelvemonth and a day,” sang Gerald, coming into Rand’s room at the Highpoint Academy, where Donald and Pepper were going over their exercises.

“What started you off like that?” asked Donald.

“Just the association of ideas from seeing Pepper, I suppose,” replied Gerald.

“But what has Pepper got to do with it?” asked Jack, who had followed Gerald in.

“Why, seeing Pepper made me think of the Dart and thinking of the Dart made me think of Lige Van Zandt and his singing and that brought up —”

“What?” asked Jack as Gerald paused.

“Tell them that my true love has gone far away,” sang Gerald.

"But I can no see the connection," demurred Donald.

"Can ye no?" returned Gerald. "Haven't you heard the news?"

"What news is that?"

"Why, don't you know that Alice's father, Mr. Royce, has been ordered away for his health?"

"I did hear something of it," admitted Donald, "but what has that to do with it?"

"Ask Pepper," replied Gerald, dodging a moment later a book that Pepper flung at him.

"What is it, Pepper?" asked Donald.

"Only some of Gerald's foolishness," returned Pepper; "I don't believe he knows himself."

"It is true then?" said Donald.

"That Gerald is going to wear a green ribbon?" returned Pepper. "Very likely, he is capable of most anything, though," added Pepper after a pause, "an orange one would be more becoming."

"I meant about Mr. Royce," went on Donald.

"Yes," replied Rand. "He has developed some lung trouble, I believe, and the doctor has

ordered him away and to be in the open air as much as possible so he is going out West and live in the open."

"When is he going?"

"In the Spring. I believe Mrs. Royce and Alice, and Nellie Whilden are going with him."

"Out to the mountains?"

"Not quite so far as that, but they will go to the nearest settlement."

"I wish I was going along," said Pepper.

"Of course you do," returned Gerald. "I don't think I would object myself."

"But what has that to do with Pepper?" persisted Donald.

"Faith, if you don't see the connection 'tis no use my trying to explain it," returned Gerald, "but if I stay here listening to your gossip instead of getting up my French it's a black mark I'll be getting to-morrow. So it's 'aure vous messures,' as we say in French."

"Listen to that, will you!" cried Pepper, "as if he isn't the one that is always gossiping."

"Come back here!" called Rand, but Gerald was off, whistling as he went, "Oh, it's all around my hat."

"I'm afraid we will all be getting dark-col-

ored marks if we don't get down to work," went on Rand.

"Don't preach, Rand," advised Pepper, "practice."

"Ditto," added Jack, whereupon the boys went off to their rooms to tackle their studies.

They were just back to the Academy from their Thanksgiving vacation and had not got fairly into the routine again, for their minds were still full of the mystery of the lost mine.

The translation of the cipher which Jack had worked out had been shown to the Colonel and at his suggestion had been destroyed so that it might not come into the possession of the robbers if they should succeed in getting the papers again, for they were doubtless still trying to get them and as Jack had determined the key, it would be easy to make a translation whenever it was needed.

The conclusion at which Gerald had jumped regarding the identity of Mrs. Royce with the missing daughter of the finder of the mine had been told to the Colonel but the boys had heard nothing more about it and were still wondering over the ownership.

"What day is this?" asked Gerald a few

mornings later while they were on their way from the breakfast room.

"The Fifth of December," returned Pepper promptly, "but why do you ask?"

"Faith, I thought it was Valentine's day," replied Gerald, holding up a letter he had received on the morning mail. "By the looks of it we have all got one of the same kind."

"Crickets!" cried Pepper, who had opened his and was hastily reading it. "It's great, isn't it?"

"I should say it was," responded Jack, "if yours is like mine."

"It is an invitation from the Whildens to spend Christmas with them," replied Pepper. "Mine says, 'Dear Pepper — You are to spend Christmas with us. You are to come the day before and stay as long as you can.' Um — um —"

"What else does yours say, Pepper?" asked Gerald, when Pepper hesitated.

"That is all that is important," replied Pepper.

"Mine says," said Jack, "'We are going to have a jolly time, there is to be a big party, the Royces and a lot of others will be there, and

we have a big surprise for you. You must come and we won't take "no" for an answer. Yours, Nellie.' "

"Oh, mine says that, too," said Pepper. "Isn't it fine?"

"It has that appearance," agreed Donald.

"Are they all alike?" asked Dick.

"All except Pepper's," replied Gerald mischievously. "There is something in his that he didn't read."

"What was it, Pepper?" asked Jack.

"N-n-nothing," stammered Pepper.

"Alice, where art thou?" whistled Gerald softly.

But Pepper went on apparently unconscious of any hidden meaning and Gerald's shaft failed of its mark.

"I wonder what the surprise can be?" pondered Rand.

"Faith, if you knew it wouldn't be a surprise," said Gerald.

"Maybe they are going—" began Pepper, but the bell for the classes rang just then and any further discussion was postponed until recess, though their thoughts during the morning were more on the letters than on their lessons.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOCKADE

“**W**HEW!” exclaimed Pepper, who was trying to look through the window of the car. “It’s snowing harder than ever and the train is going slower and slower all the time. What time is it?”

“Six o’clock,” replied Rand.

“And we ought to have been there an hour ago?” went on Pepper. “Wouldn’t it be fun if we got snowed up?”

“Not half as much fun as if we got to River-view,” replied Rand.

“And, besides I don’t think there are any provisions on the train,” put in Gerald.

“Gee!” cried Pepper, “I never thought of that. There wouldn’t be any fun in that case. Still we can’t be very far from some place where we could get something. Goodness! we don’t seem to be moving at all. I wonder where we are?”

It was the night before Christmas, and the boys were on their way to Riverview, the country home of the Whildens, after having won a reluctant assent from their parents to their spending the holiday away from home.

While the boys were talking, with a final jerk, the train had come to a stop, and after waiting a few minutes and finding that it did not go on the boys went to the platform to investigate. Here they found some of the other passengers who were seeking information like themselves. Jumping down into the snow, which was of considerable depth, they went to the head of the train where they found the conductor, surrounded by a number of impatient passengers, in consultation with the engineer as to what was the best to do. The engine had plunged into a huge snow bank which had drifted across the track and was almost buried.

"The only thing to do," decided the conductor at length, "is to back down to the last station."

"How far is it to Riverview?" asked Rand.

The conductor shrugged his shoulders.

"You know pretty near as much as I do about it," he answered, looking out into the

storm. "I don't know just where we are, but as we can't go on it might as well be a thousand miles away. If I am not mistaken though, it is just around the curve ahead. What are you going to do, try and walk there?"

"What do you think," asked Rand turning to his comrades, "shall we try it?"

"Sure," answered Gerald, "it's better than staying here."

"Or going back," added Jack.

"Get a move on you then if you are going," cried Pepper, "or we won't get there to-night."

Hurrying back into the car the boys hastily picked up their light luggage, buttoned their coats up, pulled their caps down over their ears, and plunged again into the storm.

The engine, wheezing and panting like an asthmatic whale, was snorting and blowing in the endeavor to back the stalled train, moving a few feet and again stopping as if tired but gaining a little momentum with each effort until at last it succeeded in getting the train fairly in motion. The boys stood for a few minutes watching the train until it had got under headway then setting their faces to the storm plowed through the snow. It was slow, heavy work,

and they each took turns in breaking the way, one of them going ahead until he was tired and then falling back to let the next in line take his place.

"How far did he say it was?" called Pepper, who was just then in the lead, after they had struggled along for what seemed a long time.

"He said it wasn't very far," replied Rand.

"I wonder what he calls far," grumbled Pepper. "We must have gone miles already."

"Hardly a quarter of a mile, I think," answered Rand. "Still we ought to be pretty near there, if we haven't got off the track."

"Well, that's a pleasant supposition," returned Pepper. "Hallo, what is that?" as a faint cry was borne on the wind.

"It sounded like a call for help," said Rand. "Listen, there it is again!"

From somewhere out in the storm came again the call—"Help!"

"Hallo!" shouted Pepper, "where are you?" plunging away in the direction from which the sound seemed to come.

The others were about to follow, but at a word from Rand they stopped.

"There is no good of our all going," he ar-

gued; "I will go after Pepper and you fellows can wait here. If we all go we may lose our way and wander around all night."

"As if we hadn't lost it already," put in Gerald.

"If we need any more help we can call," added Rand, starting off in the track Pepper had made and being quickly swallowed up in the blinding storm.

"Say, boys, there is a big pine over there," cried Gerald, who was doing a little exploring on his own account. "We can get under that until the others come back."

It was decidedly more comfortable under the tree than facing the storm, and the boys were not sorry for the respite. Here they waited in silence, intently listening for a call from Rand or Pepper until a faint hello was borne to their ears.

"Hallo!" returned Jack, repeating the call from time to time in response to Rand and Pepper's hail until the latter reappeared, bringing with them a man whom they had found almost exhausted wandering in the storm.

It was hardly a time for explanation, but while they waited under the shelter of the pine until the man regained something of his strength he man-

aged, between fits of coughing, to tell something of his story.

"I was on the train," he explained, "and thought I could make my way to Riverton, but it was harder than I supposed and I lost my way. I don't know what I should have done if you had not come along."

"Riverton," said Rand. "That is where we are going. Do you think you can get along with us now?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, "now that I have company, I am good for a long distance yet."

"All right, then," directed Rand. "We will try again; we will go ahead and break the way, and it will not be so hard for you."

"Do you know which way to go?" asked Dick, when Jack, taking the lead, was about to start off.

"Of course," replied Jack; "we want to keep off to the left."

"Sure of that?" asked Rand.

"Sure," responded Jack laconically.

"Why?" demanded Donald.

"Well, the wind is in the Northeast."

"What has that got to do with it?" returned Donald.

"Well, it was blowing in our faces when we got off the train, so the train must have been running to the Northeast. Then the conductor said he thought the turn was just about here. I know the road makes a turn to the Northwest, so that is the way we must go."

"I don't see how you can tell one way from the other," objected Pepper.

"Why not?" answered Jack. "The wind is blowing from that way, so that must be the Northeast, so if we keep the wind on our right hand we must be going to the Northwest."

"That sounds correct to me," admitted Gerald. "Lead on, Macduff."

"Go ahead," added Rand; "I don't know of any better plan."

Without waiting Jack had gone on, for some minutes, plowing through the drifts, which sometimes came to his waist, and then dropped back to give place to Dick, who had scarcely got started when he called with a glad shout:

"There's a light ahead!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys in chorus, plunging on with renewed energy, and a few moments later they were on the platform of the station.

CHAPTER VI

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

“CRICKETS!” cried Pepper, when he had gained the platform, stamping his feet and brushing the snow out of his neck. “I think —” but his thoughts were scattered to the winds as the door of the waiting room was thrown open and Nellie Whilden, with Alice Royce and others, came trooping out.

“Why, I thought the train was in,” exclaimed the girl in a disappointed tone as she stepped out and looked around, not recognizing her expected guests in their envelopment of snow.

“That was only Pepper blowing off steam,” answered Gerald. “It was quite a pardonable mistake.”

“Why, hallo, boys!” cried Nellie. “How did you get here?”

“Just blew in,” replied Pepper. “But how did you get here?”

“Oh, we’ve been here forever so long waiting for you,” replied Nellie.

"Are you all here, then?" she went on. "None of you got lost on the way? That's good. How are you, Pepper, Don, Rand, Gerald, Dick, Jack," shaking hands all around. "You are all here. Why, here is your father, Alice. Where did you come from, Mr. Royce?" she cried. She was shaking hands with the gentleman the boys had found. "Where did you find the boys?"

"They found me," replied Mr. Royce. "I wanted to surprise you and Alice by coming in on you unexpectedly, but I got lost on the way, and these young men picked me up."

"Of course, they did," replied Nellie. "They always seem to be on hand whenever they are needed. But come along, we want to get home — we brought the big sleigh down to meet you." Turning to a station helper she added, "Will you tell Martin we are all ready."

The young man darted off and a few moments later the big box sled with four horses attached drove up beside the station. It was piled deep with straw, into which, with much laughter and merry comment, the party settled themselves for the ride to Riverview. They were scarcely in the sled when the restive horses were off, and almost before they knew it they were at the house.

Here they were heartily welcomed by their hostess, Mrs. Whilden.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Pepper when they came into the reception hall, glancing at his companions. "We look like so many snow men. We will have to go outside and be shoveled out."

"Stand where you are," commanded Nellie, who had seized a broom and was vigorously applying it to her companions. "I'll have you all right in a minute."

"Come up to the fire and get thawed out," called Mrs. Whilden. "You must be half frozen. We were afraid you wouldn't get here in this storm."

"So were we," returned Rand, as he proceeded to detail the cause of the delay.

The boys gathered in front of the big open fire which blazed upon the hearth, where a huge yule log lay, and looked about the hall, in which a number of people were standing and sitting in little groups.

"We haven't time to stop now," declared Nellie. "Dinner is waiting and I know you are all starved. Aren't we, Pepper?"

"Speaking for myself," replied Pepper; "Je suis pret."

"Goodness gracious, Pepper, is it as bad as that?" exclaimed Nellie. "We will have to do something pretty quick. Come, Frank," addressing her brother, "show them to their rooms and then hurry back, all of you, for we have a lot to do, you know."

"Is this your busy night?" asked Rand.

"You would think so if you knew all there is before you," replied Nellie. "Hurry up, now, and don't be slow in coming back."

And before they had time to speak to any one in the hall they were hustled to their rooms to get ready for dinner.

In a few moments they were back again and introduced to the other guests, among whom they found Colonel Snow.

"Is this the surprise you promised us?" asked Gerald at the first opportunity.

"Wait and see," laughed Nellie, darting off to see that the boys and girls were properly paired as dinner was announced.

The evening meal was not a ceremonious affair. These people of wealth were not ostentatious, and sought their pleasure in life by making others happy.

"Now," announced Nellie when dinner was

over and they were all back in the hall again.

"We are going to help decorate the church."

"You are not going out in this storm again," remonstrated Mrs. Whilden.

"Oh, the storm won't hurt us," answered Nellie, "and I promised Mr. Webb that I would help him, and I am afraid the others who expected to be there won't come."

"Do you always do what you promise?" asked Gerald.

"Of course," replied Nellie; "don't you?"

"Of course," answered Gerald, "when it isn't more convenient not to."

"Don't you believe that, Miss Nellie," interposed Rand. "Gerald never goes back on his word."

"If any of you would rather stay here," went on Nellie, "you don't need to go."

"Sure, you don't think you c'ud kape wan av us here widout you," said Gerald, and all disclaiming any intention of being left out, the entire party were soon off for the church, the boys plowing a way through the snow for the girls to follow. Their destination was but a short distance away and as the road was mostly sheltered by a thick wood, where the snow was

not so heavy, they were soon at the church

Here they were heartily and gladly welcomed by the minister, as none of the others had come, and they were soon at work in making and hanging the decorations, in the manufacture of which Dick and Gerald far surpassed the others. It was eleven o'clock by the time the task was finished and then, after some sandwiches, cakes and coffee had been disposed of, the start was made for Riverview again.

The storm had passed by this time and the moon was showing through rifts in the clouds, so the return trip was made with but little discomfort. When they got back to the house they found the other and older guests were in the parlors, so the young people gathered about the fire while they talked over the happenings since they had met before.

Then as the tall clock on the stairs chimed twelve Gerald, giving a signal to his companions, slipped away from the circle, to be shortly followed by Rand, Jack and Donald. In the merry chatter their absence was not commented upon, and they passed through the hall to the outside, and a moment later there came to those within the words of the old English Christmas chant:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen. Let nothing you dismay."

"My gracious, who can that be?" cried Nellie, running to the door and throwing it open. "I didn't know there were any waits in this country. Come in, whoever you are. Why, upon my word, if it isn't the patrol," when the boys, still singing, came into the hall. "What next, I wonder."

When they had finished the song the boys would have stopped, but others who had come from the parlors at the sound of the singing insisted upon another and still another, until Mrs. Whilden interposed and sent them off to bed, saying "that if they didn't get off to sleep she wouldn't let them get up the next day."

"Did you see who was in the parlor when we came in to-night?" asked Dick when the boys had gone to their rooms.

"No," replied Jack sleepily. "Who was it?"

"Mr. Carleton."

"Mr. Carleton?" said Jack. "Who's he?"

"Why, don't you remember? The gentleman we met in Creston Thanksgiving time."

"Oh, ah, yes, um," yawned Jack; "I wonder what—" but Jack was asleep.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST SURPRISE

CHRISTMAS morning dawned bright and fair, the air was crisp and clear and the trees were hung with decorations that sparkled in the sunshine like strings of precious stones. An ideal day for Winter sports.

"Where is the surprise that you promised us?" asked Jack of Nellie when they had exchanged Christmas greetings. "I suppose it is something pleasant."

"Wait and see," responded Nellie. "Maybe it is something that you won't like."

"You ah done want teh watch out," interposed Rand in his southern dialect, which on occasion he was wont to substitute, "or yoh'll get something what yeh ain't looking foh."

"I guess that's right," laughed Jack, "or else it wouldn't be a surprise."

"You won't know what it is," went on Nellie, "until the tree is lighted to-night. The sur-

prise is hung on the tree with the other gifts. There are going to be a whole lot of surprises to-night."

"I wish then that it was night now," put in Gerald.

"Oh, my gracious, I don't!" cried Nellie. "There is too much to be done before night."

"What have we got to do to-day?" asked Alice.

"First of all there is breakfast," began Nellie.

"I never eat breakfast on Christmas day," returned Gerald.

"Why not?" asked Alice.

"I don't want to spoil my appetite for my dinner."

"Huh!" exclaimed Pepper. "Judging from my own experience, I don't think there is much danger. Certainly I am not afraid of losing mine."

"Av coorse not," returned Gerald. "Faith, Oi'd hate to foind it av ye did. Oi'm afraid to think what w'ud happen to the Moore family."

"Now Pepper isn't as bad as that," interposed Alice, "but there goes the bell and I think you will be able to do your part."

"Then you mustn't sit opposite to me," pro-

tested Gerald, "or I wouldn't be able to eat a bit for looking at you."

"Tell that to the marines," laughed Alice as they went into the breakfast room; "I'm not so green as that."

"Now what is next on the programme?" asked Jack when later they gathered in the hall again.

"Church," responded Nellie laconically.

"Church," sighed Gerald, "when the snow is calling for us to come out and be happy."

"Of course, church," returned Nellie severely. "We always go to church on Christmas. Where were you brought up?"

"Please, mam," replied Gerald meekly, "I wasn't brought, I just come."

"Like Topsy," said Nellie. "If you brought yourself up you have done pretty well."

"Considering the poor material I had to work with," agreed Gerald.

"Then," went on Nellie, "after church we are going coasting. There is a splendid hill."

"Hurrah!" cried the boys, "that is glorious," with which the girls agreed, and started off to get ready for the brief morning services. Thereafter to the hill.

It was well into the afternoon before they tired of coasting down the long incline which wound down the side of the Palisades to the bank of the river below. The momentum gained by the long descent carried the sleds a long way over the level ground and part way up another road that lead again to the top, so that there was but a comparatively short way to climb to be back to the starting point.

Dinner was ready when they got back to the house and if any of them had lost their appetites they had surely found them again on the hill. When the glorious dinner, over which a couple of hours were spent, was ended, the door of the library was thrown open. There was disclosed the Christmas tree, with its hundreds of tiny electric lights aglow. Here beside the tree, with an automobile sleigh, which was piled with packages, stood St. Nicholas with a bulky volume in his hand, which he consulted from time to time. There were many expressions of admiration as the guests entered the room, which was in darkness, except for the radiance from the lights on the tree. Concealed behind some tall palms in a corner of the room was a chorus of boys and girls, who sang a Christmas hymn.

As the hymn ended the lights in the room flashed up and St. Nicholas, consulting his book, called on the different ones present to come forward and receive their gifts, with each of which he recited a little quotation or remark that fitted the personality of the one to whom it was addressed. The boys of the patrol each received a pin from Mrs. Whilden with the motto and sign of the scouts in enamel on a gold shield. There was a handsomely bound book from Nellie, and a complete emergency kit from Colonel Snow, while Pepper had a special gift, which he slipped into his pocket without showing.

But the first surprise of the evening came when a sealed package was given to Mrs. Royce. It bore the inscription: "Christmas offering from the Uncas Patrol."

"From the Uncas Patrol?" exclaimed Mrs. Royce as she took the package and read the inscription. "But why should the Uncas Patrol give me a Christmas offering?"

"From the Uncas Patrol?" echoed Gerald. "Am I dreaming? I never heard anything about it."

"Oh, yes, you have," said Nellie, "only you don't know it."

"I don't think I know anything," replied Gerald.

"Why, what can it be?" mused Mrs. Royce, holding the package in her hand.

"Better open it and see," suggested the Colonel.

"Surprise number one," whispered Nellie to those nearest her.

"I should think it was," returned Rand. "What can it be?"

"Wait and see," replied Nellie.

Opening the package, Mrs. Royce found that it contained a number of papers.

"What is all this?" she exclaimed. "Is it some kind of a joke?"

"No," replied the Colonel. "Permit me to explain. They are a claim to, and directions for finding a gold mine, in Northwestern Canada. The mine belongs to you."

"A gold mine!" faltered Mrs. Royce. "That belongs to me? And what have the boys to do with it?"

"Well, it is quite a long story," replied the Colonel, "which I will tell you the full details of some other time."

"The story of a gold mine," cried the others,

gathering about him. "This is just the time for a story."

"But you have other more interesting things to do," demurred the Colonel.

"Oh, there isn't anything more interesting than that," they protested, whereupon the Colonel related how in making his escape from a forest fire he had come into a strange region in Northwestern Canada and chanced upon an Indian encampment, where he found a white man at the point of death. The man, greatly relieved at meeting someone from his own country, had given him the papers with directions to give them to his daughter.⁵

"What was his name?" asked Mrs. Royce eagerly.

"Mr. Deane," replied the Colonel. "Yes, he was your father. I tried to locate you in Chicago, but, as you know, you had gone away and I could not find any trace of you until Master Gerald here put me on the trail. The directions for finding the mine were in cipher and I couldn't find a solution, until Jack, with his faculty of putting two and two together, puzzled it out, so you see how it comes about that the present is from the Uncas Patrol."

"Sure, a blind man could see it with both eyes shut *now*," said Gerald.

"Of course," interposed Nellie when the Colonel had finished his story, "the Uncas had to come to the rescue. I really don't know what would happen if the Uncas should go out of business."

Mrs. Royce was enthusiastic in her expressions of appreciation and insisted on hearing all the details connected with the lost mine.

"Can't you tell us another story, Colonel, about some more of your adventures?" urged some of those present who had listened with breathless interest to the story.

"I don't think you want to hear any more to-night," replied the Colonel.

"Oh, yes, we do," protested the boys and girls.

"I think I have talked enough," returned the Colonel, "but perhaps my friend, Major Carleton, who comes from the far Northwest, will tell you something about the country up there."

"I'm awfully sorry, don't you know," began Major Carleton, "that I can't tell you any story about a gold mine and give each of you one, but if you'd care to hear of an adventure among the

Hudson's Bay fur-hunters I'll do my best to tell it."

"That will be splendid!" was the unanimous agreement as they all settled down to listen. Later on, under vastly different circumstances, the boys were to hear Major Carleton tell another story, but of that anon.

By the time that the Major had finished his story it was long past midnight and after a few minutes spent in talking over the events of the evening the lights upon the Christmas tree were turned out and the boys went off to their rooms to go over and over again the story of the mine and the adventures of Major Carleton until they finally dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TESTS

THE next morning, breakfast dispatched, the guests who had remained over night gathered in the hallway. All were discussing what they should do that day. This was to be the last day that the boys would have at Riverview, and they were anxious to make the most of it. Each one had so many suggestions to make as to what they should do, that it was likely that a week would hardly afford enough time to carry them all into effect.

"Well, boys, what is on hand for to-day?" inquired the Colonel, breaking into the stream of the discussion.

"We were just talking it over," replied Rand, "but it seems that there is so much that we would like to do, that we haven't come to any conclusion."

"Don't you think that it is time that you became first-class scouts?"

"Surely it is," replied Rand, "but you know that we have been so busy since we went back to the Academy that we haven't thought about it."

"Then don't you think that this would be a good time to take the examination and see if you can pass the tests?"

"Now?" asked Pepper.

"Isn't now as good as any other time?" asked the Colonel in turn.

"Gee!" cried Pepper, "I don't want to go in swimming to-day."

"I think we can omit that one," replied the Colonel with a laugh. "I won't require that of you to-day, for I already know that you can all do that first essential and swim for a much longer distance than is required. But how about the next?" he asked seriously.

"Which one is that?" asked Rand.

"Have fifty cents at least in the savings bank."

"Oh, I guess there isn't any trouble about that," returned Pepper. "We have all got more than that, haven't we, boys?" To this the others acceded. "And," he continued, "we made it ourselves, too."

"I am glad to hear that," went on the Colonel. "And how about the signaling?"

"We have practiced, and can do that all right," answered Rand. "Would you like to see us do it now?"

"Oh, do," interjected Nellie. "We would love to see it done. Can you really send an out and out message?"

"Of course we can," replied Pepper. "We can send one any way you like, by telegraph, or wireless, or we can send it by flags."

"We shall have to use flags here," said the Colonel.

"But where are the flags?" demanded Don.

"Why, we can use a handkerchief," returned Jack.

"That is right," commended the Colonel; "that is the Scout way. Use what you have."

"Come outside and we will get busy," went on Pepper.

There was a quick assent on the part of the others, and putting on their coats and wraps the party were soon out on the front piazza of the house.

Among them was Major Carleton, who was an interested looker on. He had renewed his acquaintance with Dick and had invited him to make a visit to the Major's home in the far

Northwest. From the Colonel the boys had learned that Major Carleton was interested in some mining property in the Canadian Rockies, in which Mr. Whilden and Colonel Snow were also interested, and it was business connected with these mines that had brought him to Creston.

"Now," said the Colonel, when they were all assembled, "we will send a message by relays and see how it comes out. Rand, you and I will go around to the other side of the house. Jack, you can go down to the turn of the road just beyond the stables and Dick can go on to the edge of the woods. Don will take his place by the big fir, then Gerald can take his station by the Lodge and Pepper will stay here to receive the message and return an answer. By this arrangement each station will be obscured from all the others but the ones from which they receive or send the messages."

By the time the Colonel had finished giving directions the boys were off for their places and were all ready to begin when Rand, with the Colonel, Nellie and others, had got to the far side of the house; Alice, Mrs. Whilden and the Major remaining with Pepper.



"WE ARE PRISONERS. COME TO OUR RESCUE."

Canadian Rockies.

"Now," said the Colonel when everything was in readiness, "this is supposed to be a most important message we are sending out and we will let you send it," to Nellie. "What shall it be?"

"I don't know," mused Nellie; "let me think a moment."

"Let us suppose," suggested the Colonel, "that you are a prisoner, shut up in a lonely castle in the land of romance and that one day while you are looking out from your latticed window,—they are always latticed windows, aren't they, in the land of romance—you should see someone signaling away off in the distance and being a princess and versed in all the requirements of your position, you could read the signals and knew that they were made by a friend, so you take your handkerchief and waving it out of the window you send a message. What would you say?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Nellie. "What would a princess say? Come to my rescue?"

"It should be as short as possible," continued the Colonel, "to avoid mistakes. Suppose we say: 'We are prisoners. Come to our rescue.'"

Using his handkerchief in lieu of a flag, Rand

sent the message by a simple code: a wave to the left signifying one, a wave to the right two, and holding it still, in front, the end of a word, there being a slight pause after each letter: thus, a being 21, this would be two waves to the right and one to the left and then brought to the front. The numbers of the letters being formed of combinations of one and two, as a, 21; b, 2; c, 1; d, 11, and so on for the alphabet.

The message was received by Jack and repeated by him to Dick, who passed it on to Donald, who sent it to Gerald, who relayed it to Pepper. There was a brief interval and then the Colonel's party became aware that an answer was being received.

"What is it?" asked Nellie when the answer to the message they had sent was being recorded by Rand. "It must be something funny," for both the Colonel and Rand were plainly amused.

"Pepper wants to know what we have been doing and whether we want bail or an alibi," explained Rand.

"He evidently thinks we are in jail instead of being imprisoned in a castle," remarked the Colonel.

"He is apparently ready to meet any emer-

gency," commented Mr. Royce. "I think we can rely on Pepper."

"I'm afraid there isn't any romance about Pepper," sighed Nellie.

"I don't think it is Pepper's fault," laughed Rand. "I rather think it was Don who mixed things up. You know how matter of fact he is. Shall we try again?"

While this had been going on a similar action was taking place on the other side of the house where Pepper was receiving the communication.

"Gee!" he muttered when the message came in, "that's a queer kind of a thing to send. I wonder if they have got it right. Sure you got that right?" he signaled back to Gerald.

"Sure," returned Gerald.

"What can it be?" asked Alice.

"It says, 'We have been arrested. Help us out.'"

"What ever does that mean?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Pepper. "I guess it must have got twisted somewhere."

"What answer are you going to send?"

"Would you ask them what they have been pinched for?"

"Pinched?" queried Alice. "What does that mean?"

"Oh, that's slang for arrested," explained Pepper. "Picked that up from Jack. I guess we'll offer help." With careful precision he responded and then they watched Gerald send on the message to the next station.

"What is it now?" asked Alice a little later when Gerald began signaling again to them.

"Only some of Gerald's nonsense," replied Pepper, getting red in the face and shaking his fist at his tormentor.

"But what is it?" persisted Alice.

"He is asking me if I remember something."

"Something unpleasant?"

"N-no, n-not exactly," stammered Pepper, "b-b-but — there is another message coming. The test is over," he announced, and greatly to his relief the Colonel, with Rand and the rest of the party, came up and Pepper was not obliged to disclose that Gerald had signaled: "Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt."

The original message which had been sent and the copy received and made by Pepper was then compared with the other and it was found that it was as Rand had guessed. Donald, who had

made the change by taking it for granted that a prisoner was somebody who had been arrested, the land of romance being an unheard-of-country to him, had substituted the unprosaic wording.

"You have all most satisfactorily met the requirements in actual emergencies," asserted the Colonel, "and now I think you ought to show us what you can do with the next test, don't you think so, Miss Nellie?"

"Why, what is it?" asked Nellie.

"Cook satisfactorily two out of the following dishes, as may be directed: Porridge, bacon, hunter's stew; or skin and cook a rabbit, or pluck and cook a bird. Also make a 'damper' of half a pound of flour, or a 'twist' baked on a thick stick. The day is fine. I think I will require them to cook a Scout dinner, out-of-doors, of course, and invite us all to it."

"Oh, wouldn't that be great!" cried the young people.

"But where are we going to get the things to cook?" asked Pepper.

"I will supply them," replied Mrs. Whilden. "Am I to be invited, too?"

"Of course," responded the boys, "you will be the guest of honor."

"Where shall we have it?" asked Rand.

"Why, out in the woods, of course," replied Pepper; "who ever heard of a hunter's dinner anywhere else."

"Very well, then," said the Colonel, "we will give you two hours to get up the dinner; is that time enough?"

"That will be plenty," Rand replied for the patrol.

"As soon as you find a place to have it," said Mrs. Whilden, "I will send one of the men down with the provisions."

"Oh, that won't do at all," protested the boys; "we want to take them down ourselves."

"Very well, if you will come to the kitchen door in about ten minutes I will have everything ready for you."

"But what are we going to do?" asked Nellie when the boys were about to start for the woods.

"Come with us and learn how to cook; it may come in useful some day," suggested Gerald, and as his invitation was heartily seconded by the others the girls accepted and joined them in their expedition.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECOND SURPRISE

WITH a supply of provisions which included chickens, bacon, potatoes, oat-meal, flour, coffee, and sugar, and equipped also with some utensils for cooking, the party went into the nearby woods. Here they located an open place which was comparatively free from snow. This was soon cleared or tramped down and in a few moments the boys had gathered enough wood to start the fire. In a little while, each boy performing an allotted task under Rand's directions, the various dishes were cooking over or in front of the blaze. The "damper" and "twist" both were baking.

When the cooking was done and the dinner ready to serve, the guests, Mrs. Whilden and her friends, Colonel Snow, Major Carleton and the others, were summoned. Seats had been provided by putting boards, which had been brought from the barn, upon large stones, which the boys

had found well placed, and upon these the guests were seated and served by the boys. The meal was none the less enjoyed because partaken of in the crisp air and the diners enjoyed the novelty of the event so thoroughly that everything was eaten to the last scrap.

"I think," began the Colonel when the meal was concluded, "that the boys have thus far passed the tests in a very satisfactory manner, but I should like to take a vote upon the question of their ability to cook. What do you say, Mrs. Whilden?"

"If I have a vote," replied Mrs. Whilden laughingly, "I vote yes. If I could always have a cook who would do as well I would be more than satisfied."

"Now, then," went on the Colonel, "I have six sheets of paper here. If each of you will draw a map of some locality and pass it to his neighbor to interpret, we will conclude the examination."

"In a moment each boy was at work drawing a map of some locality with which he was familiar, which, when he had finished it, he turned over to his neighbor to see if he could read it. The work was all creditably done, but Jack's was

decided to be the best, with Donald's a close second.

"Deuced clever," was the Major's comment on Jack's work. "You will make a first class scout."

"I certainly hope so," replied Jack.

"Not make one," commented the Colonel, "is one. I am more than pleased," he went on, "to declare you all First Class Scouts, and a credit to the Boy Scouts, and now I think Mr. Royce has a word to say to you."

"Another surprise," whispered Nellie to Rand.

"The woods are full of them," returned Rand.

"I am not going to make any speech," said Mr. Royce, "so you need not be alarmed, for I shall come to the point at once. Since last night Mrs. Royce and I have been talking over the matter of the gold mine which you presented to her."

"But —" began Rand.

"That is all right," went on Mr. Royce. "It certainly came through you if not from you, and we have decided to call it the Uncas Mine in honor of your patrol, and," adding after a slight pause, "to divide a fourth interest among you, giving you each a twenty-fourth interest."

The boys listened to the conclusion of Mr. Royce's words in stupefied amazement, while the girls clapped their hands.

"But —" protested Rand as soon as he recovered the use of his tongue, "we haven't done anything."

"I differ with you on that point," returned Mr. Royce. "We cannot tell, of course, if there will anything ever come of it. We do not even know that we will ever find the mine, and if we do it may have since been discovered by someone else, so that in the end it may only prove a bubble, but still," he added, laughing, "we think you are entitled to a share in the 'bubble.' However, it may turn out, we would probably have never known anything about it except for Gerald's clever guess that Ross might be Royce."

"What do you think of that!" whispered Pepper to Gerald, accompanying the remark with a slap upon the back that sent his comrade staggering.

"And for Jack's skill in working out the cipher, so that we feel that you are entitled to an interest."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Major Carleton.

"I expect to go out to the Rockies in the

Spring," went on Mr. Royce, "and see what I can find out about the location of the mine and arrange for making a trip to it a little later."

"Gee!" exclaimed Pepper when Mr. Royce had finished, "I should like to go out and see our mine."

"Our mine!" cried Gerald. "Listen to that. He is putting on airs already."

"That is right, Pepper," commended Mr. Royce. "I want you all to feel that you have an interest in it and that it is *our* mine."

"Faith, Oi was going to propose that we go coasting, but d'ye think 'twould look well to see a mine owner sliding down hill."

"In my opinion," began Donald, "'tis na well to count your chickens before they are hatched."

"That reminds me," said Dick.

"That we ought to celebrate your becoming first class scouts," broke in Nellie. "What do you say to a sleigh ride? We can have out the big sleigh, the sleighing is just fine, and go to Hilltop Inn for supper and a dance. We can pick up a lot of the boys and girls on the way."

"'Twould no be a bad plan," assented Donald.

"Then I will go and have the sleigh gotten out and we will be all ready to start as soon as you

get through with your housekeeping," said the young hostess, starting for the house with the others.

"You needn't stop to clean up," suggested Mrs. Whilden. "Just leave things as they are and I will have one of the men come down after them."

"Thank you," replied Rand, "but that isn't according to the Scout spirit. We don't leave any work for others that we can do ourselves."

"The millennium must be right at hand," concluded Mrs. Whilden as the party moved away.

While talking the boys had been busily at work. After they had burned the rubbish that was left, they extinguished the fire, cleaned up the place, and gathering together the cooking utensils they carried them back to the house.

Although this had occupied but a few minutes, by the time they were through the horses, thanks to Nellie's energetic work, were attached to the sleigh and ready for the outing. The start was quickly made and gathering up a complement of boys and girls from the neighborhood a happy afternoon and evening at the Inn brought the Christmas holiday festivities to an end and a late train carried the boys back to Creston to spend

the remainder of their vacation at home.

The first of the year found them once more at the Academy where, in the routine of school life and the pursuit of their studies, the other incidents of their visit to Riverview passed from their minds, and the gold mine assumed the value of a castle in Spain. Although they heard from time to time from Frank Whilden they had no further word about the mine, and concluded that it, as Mr. Royce suggested, had been little more than a bubble which, perhaps, had now bursted.

It was not until near the close of the school session that they heard anything from Mr. Royce but one morning just after they had completed their examinations and were actively preparing to return home Rand received a letter from him, saying that he had gone out as far as Prospect on the edge of the Rockies and had made several trips up into the region where the mine was supposed to be located. He had made a few cautious inquiries, not wishing to attract undue attention until he was ready to go on, and, so far as he could learn, the mine had never been located although search had been made for a rich mine which was supposed to be somewhere in that locality.

He had now returned as far East as Chicago where he was to meet his family who were going back with him. They would go as far as Winnipeg where they would stop for a little while and he invited Rand, also Pepper and Dick to come out there and join him in the search for the mine. Money for the expenses of their trip he had arranged for.

The ones who were left out were a little disposed to be envious of the companions' good fortune, but the Scout spirit prevailed and they heartily congratulated them on their good luck. And they were in turn as heartily congratulated the next day when they received a letter from Colonel Snow inviting them to make a trip to the West with him. It required not a little diplomacy on the part of the boys, added to the urgent persuasion of Colonel Snow, who promised to look after them, to secure the permission of their parents to go so far from home, but it was finally accomplished and a week after school closed they were on their way West. They were, however, to be divided into parties, as Colonel Snow had business requiring his attention in Dakota.

CHAPTER X

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

“GEE!” said Pepper, stopping to look about him. “We’ve got here at last. But,” he added disappointedly, “this ain’t any different from any other city.”

“What did you expect?” asked Rand. “A lot of wigwams and log houses?”

“Rather think I did,” replied Pepper. “Anyhow I didn’t expect to see such buildings as these.”

“Thought the people went around in furs and snowshoes all the year round, didn’t you?”

“Something like that,” admitted Pepper, “but as far as I can see we might be back in the States. Hello!” he exclaimed excitedly; “s-s-say, is this true or am I d-dreaming?”

“What is the matter now?” demanded Rand.

“Why, I just saw Monkey Rae or his ghost turning that corner.”

“Guess you must have been dreaming,” said

Dick. "What would Monkey Rae be doing out here in Winnipeg?"

"D-don't know, I'm sure," replied Pepper, "but it's something he oughtn't and there's trouble coming our way as sure as you're born."

"Oh, nonsense," retorted Dick. "The trouble with you is that you have got Monkey Rae on the brain."

"Well, maybe I have," returned Pepper, more quietly. "I was pretty sure I saw him, but of course it may have been someone that looked like him. But I thought there would be someone at the station to meet us. They knew we were coming, didn't they?"

"Oh, I guess they thought we could take care of ourselves. I don't believe the place is so big that we can't find our way around. They are at the Lakeview House and we can easily locate that."

"But still it's queer that they didn't come to meet us," persisted Pepper.

The boys were standing on the main street, having just got off of the train at the depot. They had come direct from Detroit where they parted from their companions, who, with Colonel Snow, were going on to Dakota where the

Colonel had been stationed at one time, and who would probably meet them later at Prospect in the Canadian Rockies.

They had fully expected that Mr. Royce or the girls would meet them on the arrival of the train and were greatly disappointed that there were none of them there.

"What are we going to do?" asked Pepper.

"Why, go to the hotel of course," replied Rand. "I will go into the station and inquire where the house is." This he did and soon returned.

"They say it is only a little way from here," announced Rand. "We can easily walk there and I have ordered our trunk sent up."

"All right then, let's get along," returned Dick. "Maybe they have forgotten we were coming to-day and we will give them a surprise."

"Hallo!" cried Pepper, a moment later. "Now, what do you think of that?" And instantly he started off on a run up the street.

"What is the matter with you, Pepper?" demanded Rand when they had overtaken him. "Anything the matter with your head?"

"Oh, my head is all right," responded Pepper, "but I saw Rae."

"What, again?" said Dick.

"No, not again," answered Pepper, "this was the father. I believe he is spying on us."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Dick. "I say, Pepper, you ought to have your eyes examined. You'll be taking one of us for Monkey pretty soon."

"But I tell you I did see him," persisted Pepper, "and I'll bet he is tracking us."

"It's only your imagination, Pepper," reiterated Dick. "It's hardly possible that he is here."

"Maybe it isn't possible," retorted Pepper, "but he is here just the same."

While disputing over the matter they had continued on their way.

"Hold on," interrupted Rand stopping in front of quite an imposing looking building. "You were so busy talking that you were going right by the place."

"This isn't so bad," decided Pepper looking at the building. "This is a good ways from an Indian wigwam."

"Is Mr. Royce stopping here?" asked Rand at the desk when they went into the lobby of the hotel.

"May I ask who you are?" asked the clerk in turn regarding them curiously.

"My name is Randolph Peyton. My chums and I have just arrived from Detroit on the train and were to meet the Royces here."

"Oh," responded the clerk. "They are here. I will send up your name and learn if they will see you. James," he added a moment later to one of the bell boys, "you can show the party up to No. 10."

Going with the boy they were taken to an upper floor where, as they stepped from the elevator, they found Nellie Whilden waiting.

"Hallo!" cried Pepper when he saw her. "I thought you were coming to meet us at the train. W-w-what w-what is the m-m-mattèr?" as he caught sight of her face.

"Oh, I am so glad that you have got here!" exclaimed Nellie without replying to Pepper's question, leading the way to the suite occupied by the Royces, where they found Mrs. Royce and Alice, who were apparently greatly troubled, for their eyes were red from weeping.

"Indeed I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Royce, repeating Nellie's greeting, greatly to the boys' mystification. "I hope you can help us."

"We certainly will if we can," answered Rand.
"But what is amiss?"

"You tell them, Nellie," said Mrs. Royce, sinking back wearily in her chair, the animation she had shown in greeting the boys deserting her.

"Mr. Royce has gone," explained Nellie briefly.

"Gone!" echoed the boys. "What of it? How, when, where?"

"We don't know," answered Nellie. "We only know that he went out the other day in answer to a message and hasn't come back and we cannot find any trace of him."

"That is queer," commented Rand. "I wonder where he could have gone. Do you know what the message was?"

Mrs. Royce shook her head. "We didn't see it," she said.

"Then you think he is detained unwillingly?"

"W-w-what did I tell you," broke in Pepper. "I knew it."

"Well, if you knew it you didn't tell us," replied Rand. "What did you know?"

"D-d-didn't I tell you about Monkey Rae?" cried Pepper impatiently.

"Monkey Rae!" exclaimed Nellie. "What has Monkey Rae to do with it?"

"Pepper thinks he saw Monkey Rae here," explained Rand.

"I don't think now, I know it," asserted Pepper.

"But what has that got to do with it?" repeated Nellie.

"You will have to ask Pepper," replied Rand.

"Why, that is plain enough," answered Pepper. "Don't you know that Dublin and Rae are pals?"

"I don't know what that has to do with it," replied Nellie.

"And that Dublin once stole the papers about the mine," went on Pepper.

"I begin to see," interposed Rand.

"But what do you see?" asked Alice.

"It may have been Rae who sent the message to Mr. Royce."

"But I don't see yet," exclaimed Nellie.

"Why, then, when Mr. Royce went in answer to the message they must have captured him, probably, to try and make him tell them where the mine is located."

"Who?" asked Mrs. Royce.

"Why, Rae and whoever is with him," replied Pepper.

"And I thought Pepper hadn't any imagination," murmured Nellie. "This is the land of romance for fair."

"This is terrible, indeed. The mine — Oh, I wish we had never heard of the mine," exclaimed Mrs. Royce. "It brings nothing but trouble with it."

"Do you think that they will do harm?" asked Alice in a whisper.

"I don't think so," answered Rand, "for that wouldn't benefit them any."

"What shall we do?" cried Mrs. Royce, starting up and pacing the floor. "Oh, we must do something."

"Have you notified the police?" asked Dick.

"We did that right away," replied Nellie, "but so far they haven't found any clue."

"If we c-c-could find R-r-rae," put in Pepper, "I know we c-c-could f-find Mr. R-Royce."

"I believe you are right, Pepper," cried Nellie. "We ought to tell the police about him."

"That is a good idea," agreed Rand.

"And send word to Colonel Snow," added

Pepper. "He might be willing to change his route and come this way."

"Pepper, you're a brick," cried Nellie. "You are full of resources. I declare I begin to feel better already."

"But where can we find Colonel Snow?" asked Mrs. Royce.

"He was going to Yankton, Dakota," said Rand; "perhaps he is there already. We can telegraph on the chance of catching him there."

"That is the way," cried Nellie enthusiastically. "Hurrah for the Uncas. I knew that you could help us. Now, let's get busy."

"The first thing to do is to write out a telegram," suggested Pepper, "and while you are doing that, if you don't mind, I think I will get something to eat."

"Why, of course," said Mrs. Royce. "I hope you will excuse us, but we have been so worried that we haven't thought about eating. I will order something for you at once."

"Don't do that," objected Pepper, "we can just run down to the restaurant, get a bite, and be back by the time you have the telegram ready. Then we will get to work."

"You know the animals have to be fed to keep

them in a good humor," remarked Rand, half apologetically, as he and Dick followed Pepper, who was part way down the stairs by that time.

"But don't be long," urged Nellie. "It will seem hours while you are away."

It was but a few minutes, however, before they were back, and as Pepper put it, "Ready for business."

"Here is the telegram," said Mrs. Royce. "I have made it as short as I could: 'Colonel Snow. Can you come to Winnipeg. Most important.' Now, how shall I sign it?"

"Better put your name to it," answered Pepper. "The Colonel will know then that it is really important."

"Now," went on Pepper, "suppose, Rand, that you take the telegram to the office, while Dick and I go to police headquarters and tell them about Rae. We can save time that way."

"All right, General," responded Rand good-naturedly, "since you seem to be running this thing."

"And keep your eyes open for Rae and his aids," added Pepper, as they started. "Then we can come back and plan what to do next."

"How long do you think it will be before

the Colonel can get here?" asked Nellie when the telegram had been sent. She and Alice had accompanied Rand and they were on their way back to the hotel.

"If he gets the message promptly," replied Rand, "and starts at once, as I believe he will, he ought to get here sometime to-morrow."

"Oh, I shall be so glad," said Alice. "We felt so alone and didn't know what to do, but now it seems so different."

"I wonder how Pepper and Dick are making out?" broke in Nellie. "Let's hurry back; they may have some good news for us."

But when they reached the house they found that the boys had not yet returned, and after a time their prolonged absence became another source of worry.

"I wonder what has become of them," exclaimed Nellie for the dozenth time as the hours passed and still there came no word nor did the boys return.

"I think, perhaps, it would be advisable," suggested Mrs. Royce at length, "to call up the police headquarters and see if they have been there. I am getting worried about them, too."

"Oh, there isn't any need to worry," replied

Rand, "they are probably walking around looking at the city."

But, nevertheless, he made inquiry at police headquarters, and learned that the boys had not been there at all, nor at any of the stations, nor had anything been heard of them.

"Oh, we must do something right away!" exclaimed Mrs. Royce, when this was reported. "Why, this is terrible. First, Mr. Royce goes out and doesn't come back and now the boys have gone. I feel as if I should go wild."

"Oh, they will come out all right," Rand assured her. "They can take care of themselves." He expressed an assurance he did not feel. "It is certainly queer," he admitted a little later to Nellie and Alice. "I can't understand it. I am concerned, too, about Mrs. Royce. I am afraid she will break down altogether. If we can keep her quiet for the night, why, it is likely that the Colonel will be here to-morrow."

Nellie was about to answer when the telephone bell rang to report that there was a telegram for Mrs. Royce and that the clerk was sending it up.

"Oh, I hope it isn't any more bad news!" exclaimed Alice.

"It is more likely to be good news," replied Rand. "Things are going the other way now. There," he cried exultantly, when it proved to be a telegram from Colonel Snow saying that he was on his way to Winnipeg, "isn't that good news?"

"I suppose anything is good that isn't bad," sighed Mrs. Royce, "but I wish the boys would come back."

Acting upon Rand's suggestion a medical man was called in who prescribed a sleeping potion for Mrs. Royce, which she was induced to take after some demur, and in a little while she was in a quiet sleep — the first she had had since Mr. Royce's disappearance. But the night wore drearily on for the others while, with occasional intervals of sleep, they watched and waited for Dick and Pepper to return. The morning came at length but the boys were still away. It was a great relief for all, therefore, when at an early hour the Colonel with Jack, Donald and Gerald arrived.

"Well, what is the matter, my boy," he asked when he alighted from the train where the party were met by Rand. "I thought it must be urgent so we came at once."

"It is even more urgent now than when we sent the telegram," replied Rand. "Then Mr. Royce had vanished. He has been missing for two days, but now Dick and Pepper have gone, too."

"Umph," mused the Colonel when Rand had told the story of the events of the past few hours. "And they didn't get as far as the police station. It is certainly mysterious, but I am inclined to believe that the enemy have something to do with it."

"You mean—" began Jack.

"Our old enemy, of course, Rae and his cohorts," replied the Colonel.

"Do you think they would do them any harm?" asked Rand.

"We will hope not," answered the Colonel. "But I think the first thing to do is to give the police a description of this man and the boy Monkey. We will go at once to police headquarters. It is possible that they may have some news for us."

Arriving at the station they learned that while nothing had been heard from Mr. Royce or Dick or Pepper, an officer had found that two boys who answered to the description of the missing

lads, had secured a boat the day before, and had gone up the river.

"That can't possibly be them," interjected Rand. "What would they go out rowing for?"

"Anything is possible when you are looking for clues," responded the Colonel. "You must never overlook anything no matter how impossible it may seem."

They had gone the day before, the police further reported, and had not returned the boat. The man from whom they had hired the boat had objected at first to letting them have it, but they had demonstrated that they knew all about motor boats and knew from experience how to handle them.

"That is just like the boys," cried Gerald. "So it was a motor boat? Well, I believe they would undertake to run a steamship."

"We have been asked to see if we could find any trace of the boat," added the officer in charge.

"I think," concluded the Colonel, "that perhaps the best way would be for us to take up the task of finding the boys and the boat. We will hire another boat and make a thorough search along the route, but I would be very glad if you

will send an officer with us in case there should be need. We have some desperate and unscrupulous characters to deal with."

"Perhaps that would be a better way," agreed the officer, "for you can identify these people if you should happen to run across them. I will send Cragen with you, he is both a cool and capable man."

"Thank you," said the Colonel. "Now I think we had better look up a boat. But first we ought to let Mrs. Royce know that we are going; she may think that Rand has gotten lost, too. Perhaps, though, it would be better if you went back and —"

But Rand hastily protested against being left out of the expedition and it was finally decided to telephone to the hotel that the Colonel had arrived and that they had found a clew which they were following and that they hoped soon to return with good news.

Going to the water front they went to the repair yard where the boys had hired the boat. They procured a sizable motor boat with a grizzled old sailor as skipper and after a little delay set out on the course the boys had taken on the previous day.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE TRAIL

“SHS!” said Pepper in a low tone as he and Dick were going down the street toward the police station. They had just left Rand with the girls at the corner, their ways lying in different directions.

“What is it now?” demanded Dick.

“Look there,” returned Pepper, “over by the other corner.”

“Well, what is it?” asked Dick. “More ghosts?”

“It’s Sam Tompkins, as sure as fate,” whispered Pepper.

“Sam Tompkins!” cried Dick. “Say, Pepper, if you keep on, the first thing you know you will be having all Creston here. I believe you are right after all, Pepper,” he admitted after a second look. “That’s Sam for certain.”

“Of course it is,” replied Pepper, “that’s what I’ve been telling you all along.”

"But what is he doing out here?"

"I don't know what he is doing," replied Pepper, "but, of course, he is out here with Rae. That is clear enough. Now, if we knew where he was hanging out I believe we could get on the track of Mr. Royce."

"What shall we do?" asked Dick. "Tell the police about him."

"I s-s-say," began Pepper.

"Let her go, Pepper."

"L-l-let's pretend that we d-d-don't see him and t-then we c-can follow him, s-s-see where he goes and t-tell the police."

"That's a good scheme, Pepper," agreed Dick with enthusiasm. "We'll do it."

Sam sauntered leisurely along apparently not noticing that anyone was following him. Presently he was joined by Monkey Rae who seemed to have been waiting for him and the two went on down to the bank of the river. Here they were seen getting into a small gasoline propelled launch, which had been tied up to a small dock. Casting off the painter they went out on the river headed toward the lake.

"They have got a hiding place somewhere up in the country," exclaimed Pepper, as he and

Dick came down to the dock. "If we only had a boat we could follow them and see where they go."

"What is the matter with hiring one and going after them!" cried Dick.

"There isn't anything, if we could find the craft."

"There is a place over there," went on Dick, indicating a repair shop a little farther up the river; "they have a lot of boats there and maybe we could hire one."

"How about sending word to the police station?" asked Pepper.

"We can't stop for that now."

Going to the place Dick had pointed out the boys, without much difficulty, succeeded in getting a small launch for an hour or two without stating the special object they had in view. The boat in which Sam and Monkey were, was now some distance away, but was moving very slowly. Occasionally it would disappear around some bend in the river, but generally the boys had no difficulty in keeping it in sight.

"They don't seem to be in any hurry," said Dick, "and they evidently haven't any idea we are following them."

"It's going to be a long trip, though. I wish we could have sent some word to Rand. But where are they going now. See, they have run ashore."

This was not exactly the fact, for when Pepper and Dick proceeding cautiously had come opposite to the place where they had last seen their quarry, they found that the other boat had disappeared up a small creek which emptied into the river.

"Shall we follow them up?" asked Dick, when they had run close into the mouth of the creek and were noting the landmarks so that they could find it again.

"Better not, I think," determined Pepper, "but we can land just above here, and take a look about on the shore. The woods are very thick, and we will run little risk of being seen."

Pepper pointed out a strip of gravelly beach a little way beyond the creek, for which they headed. Running the boat on the beach Pepper gave his attention to the engine while Dick carried the anchor up on the bank, and then made his way cautiously into the underbrush which here grew thickly.

Pepper had not noticed his chum's departure,

but suddenly heard a call that caused him to sit up and take notice. Dick was not in sight but there was evidently a great commotion in the nearby bushes. To this point Pepper rushed, with all alacrity, calling out, "What is the matter?"

He had gone but a little way, however, when he was suddenly seized by two men who sprang upon him from a thick clump of bushes. He struggled valiantly but was no match for his burly antagonists. Soon his arms were pinioned and then he discovered that Dick, too, was in the same predicament.

"Fell right into the trap, didn't you?" said the man who had hold of Pepper, and whom he now saw was Rae himself. "Thought we'd ketch you."

"Don't talk so much and come along," interrupted the other man. "It will be getting dark soon and we can never find our way through this cursed swamp. We've been here a blessed time."

"Get along then," returned Rae surlily.

They were a few moments later joined by Monkey and Sam who had evidently been waiting a short distance away.

"Oh, but you were too easy," said Monkey, and Pepper was chagrined enough at thought of the simple way Dick and he had fallen into the toils of the enemy.

With the man who seemed to be in command in the lead, a start was made through the swamp, all of them walking in Indian file with Dick and Pepper in the center, with Monkey just behind.

"Keep your eyes open for a chance to get away," whispered Pepper to Dick when they happened to be a little apart from the others.

"All right," whispered Dick in return, but as if overhearing them or anticipating such an attempt one of the men now took his place between the boys.

For more than a mile they went on by a devious path, winding in and out about the trees, and from one hammock to another, until at length they came upon a rise of ground, and presently emerged upon an open space of a considerable extent. In view stood a great house which looked like a prison, with many outbuildings to be seen about. It was now almost dark and they could only see the outlines of the structure which was evidently large and of considerable antiquity. Later they were to learn that it had

once served as an asylum for the insane, but was now deserted by the authorities and had become the rendezvous of a rascally band.

The house was in darkness, but after making a circuit about it the man in the lead opened a door in the back which gave entrance into an old-fashioned kitchen.

As soon as they had entered, the door was closed and bolted, and a lamp was lit. Later, other men appeared from other parts of the house and preparation was made for getting supper.

For the time nothing was said to the boys, the leader of the gang and Rae going off with a candle into another part of the building. Soon they returned, however, and instituted a thorough search of the boys' clothing, examining with care every scrap of paper found in the pockets.

"Here is a copy of that paper with the quantity of figures," said one of the searchers, and the boys were mightily thankful that the Colonel had been so wise as to destroy the translation of the mine cipher.

The leader and Rae were evidently much disappointed by the result of their search, and the

latter particularly seemed disposed to do the boys bodily harm, but finally he left the room.

"I wonder what they are going to do with us," whispered Dick.

"I don't know," returned Pepper, "but I know what I am going to do the first chance I get."

"What is that?"

"Make a bolt for it."

By this time the supper was ready. Rae came back and they all sat down at a long table at which Pepper and Dick, their arms freed, were allowed places.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Pepper, when the meal was over.

"Don't know yet," answered the leader looking at him thoughtfully. "Keep you here as a ransom until your friends make up their minds to tell us where the mine you are looking for is, I guess."

"But the police will find us before then."

"If you wait until the police find you, you will be a good deal older than you are now," said the man.

"What is the next move, Captain?" asked one of the men.

"Put these fellows," indicating the boys, "in a safe place."

"We can soon do that," replied the man. Taking up a candle he ordered Pepper and Dick to follow him. Leading the way, he passed through a wide hall, up a flight of broad steps and then through another hall and up a narrower flight to a hall upon which opened a number of doors. Unlocking one of these he directed Dick to enter. Pepper was about to follow when the man stopped him.

"Guess you'll get along better alone," he said, closing the door and securing it. Passing a few steps farther along the hall he opened the door of another room into which he ordered Pepper to enter.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Pepper again, as the man was about going away.

"I ain't good at conundrums," replied the man. "Keep you to grow up with the country, perhaps." Closing the door and locking it, he went off whistling softly.

The place in which Pepper found himself was, as well as he could determine in the darkness, a room of considerable size. Going to the window he could see the sky and noted, in a direct

line before him, the North star. He also made out an iron balcony which could be utilized in effecting an escape if he had a rope. Striking a match he saw that there was a bed and two chairs in the room and that was all.

"Might be worse off," he soliloquized, sitting down on one of the chairs and looking around. "Seems to me I have made a kind of a mess of it. Instead of getting Mr. Royce out I have got myself in. Don't suppose there is any use of making any fuss over it, but I wonder what chance there is of getting out of here."

Going to the door through which he had entered, he found that it was solidly built of two inch stuff with a stout mortised lock and was securely fastened.

"Not much chance to get out that way," he decided. "That door must have been built to keep Indians out; anyhow I think it is strong enough to keep me in."

"How about the other one," thought Pepper, going over to a door which apparently connected with an adjoining room. This, although not as heavy as the other, was still a stout door and was securely locked.

"Looks as if the window was the only thing,"

concluded Pepper. "Now, if I only had a rope. Wonder if I couldn't make one out of the bed clothes and slide down." Going to the bed which was plentifully supplied with bedding he was about to begin tearing it into strips when he heard footsteps in the hall.

"I think I had better wait awhile," he decided, throwing himself down upon the bed.

The steps stopped at the door, the key was turned and Monkey Rae, accompanied by the man who had brought him there came into the room.

CHAPTER XII

A NIGHT OF TROUBLE

“**J**UST wanted to look in on you and see if you were all right,” said Monkey with a grin.

Pepper, who pretended to be asleep, made no answer and the man was about to turn away when Monkey cried:

“Hey! wake up there, Pepper Blake,” at the same time giving the boy a stinging slap. “What do you think of yourself now? Guess we’ve got you where you won’t get away.”

Pepper made no reply, but jumping from the bed struck out at Monkey so quickly that the latter had no time to ward off the blow, and was struck fairly in the face with a force that made his teeth rattle. Pepper followed this with another so instantaneously that he had Monkey fairly driven into the corner before he had a chance to rally.

“Here, that will do,” cried the man as soon

as he had recovered from his astonishment, getting between the two. "We didn't come up here to have a fight."

"Let me alone," cried Monkey, dodging beneath the man's arm. "I am going to pay you up for that, Pepper Blake."

"All right, Monkey Rae," responded Pepper. "Come on, then."

Monkey sprang at Pepper, who was all ready to meet him, but the man catching Monkey by the collar pulled him back.

"You can have it out to-morrow if you want to," he said, "but we have to get downstairs again now."

"I'll knock the stuffing out of you to-morrow," shouted Monkey as the man dragged him out of the room and locked the door again, taking the key with him.

As soon as they had gone Pepper set about the task of making his rope, when there came a second interruption. Upon the door giving access to the hallway there was a low tapping and a whisper, "Pepper, Pepper."

"Hallo!" called Pepper cautiously. "Who is it?"

"Shs! not so loud," was the whispered re-

ply. "It's Dick. I wanted to locate your room."

"S-s-say —" began Pepper.

"Shs," whispered Dick. "I am going to try and get in there. You keep quiet and listen for anyone while I am working."

"B-b-but —"

"Never mind now; let's see if I can get in."

For a few moments Dick could be heard working at the lock; then as steps were heard coming up the stairs he slipped away.

The sound of the steps showed that whoever was passing that way had some other objective point, for it soon faded away.

"Goodness, I hope they won't catch him," thought Pepper as he listened anxiously. "I wonder how he got out of his own room."

The steps that had served as a warning were now heard more plainly again, showing that the person was returning and was once more going down the stairs.

"Guess they didn't catch him," continued Pepper, eagerly listening for his comrade's return, but it was some time before the tapping at the door announced that Dick was back on the job.

"Are you all right, Dick?" whispered Pepper.

"Yes," responded Dick. "I'll have this thing open in a minute and then we can talk."

In a few minutes the bolt slid back and Dick came into the room.

"How did you ever manage it?" asked Pepper when Dick had closed the door.

"Picked the lock," answered Dick. "You know my knife has a lot of attachments, including a button hook. It wasn't intended for picking locks," he added, "but it occasionally comes in handy for that purpose. Glad they didn't take it away from me."

"I'm awful glad you are here," went on Pepper, "and now what is the next thing to do?"

"Get away."

"That's it. But do you think we can do it?"

"Guess we can. They will think we are safely locked in here and so they won't keep any watch outside."

"Come on then and let's get away."

"There isn't any hurry," responded Dick. "We want to plan it all out before we make the start. I think we had better wait till everybody is asleep, then find our way out. But what have you been doing?"

"Making a rope out of the bed clothes."

"What for?"

"To drop out of the window with, but if we go out the door and anyone comes in here after we have gone, they will think we have escaped that way."

"That isn't a bad idea," commended Dick. "I will help you do it."

Getting to work they leisurely proceeded by tearing the bed clothes into strips, and knotting the strips together, to make a rope some thirty feet in length.

They had it almost completed when footsteps were heard coming along the hall.

"Here they come again," whispered Dick, when the steps stopped at the door. "What shall we do?"

"You get under the bed," directed Pepper in a whisper.

Dick scrambled under the bed just as the door was opened and Monkey Rae, carrying a lighted candle, came into the room, followed by Sam Tompkins. The fact that the door was unlocked seemed to escape their attention.

"Didn't expect to see me, did you?" said Monkey, setting the candle upon a chair and closing the door behind him. "Here is where it

is coming to you good and hard," going up to Pepper.

"Give it to him good, Monkey," encouraged Sam, but that he was there for some other purpose than to afford his chum encouragement was soon to be made manifest.

"Pepper backed off into the corner and prepared to defend himself. Monkey was bigger and stronger than he was, but Pepper was supple as a cat and had plenty of pluck and would put up a good fight before he was vanquished. He counted, however, on only one antagonist.

There was little time wasted in preliminaries. Monkey made a rush at Pepper, striking out with his right arm, which Pepper caught with his left, and making a counter on Monkey, which the latter warded off. For a moment or two they sparred, neither getting in an effectual blow, when Sam, getting close to Pepper, underhandedly hit him a rap on the head that dazed him and put him at Monkey's mercy. But the next instant Sam received a blow from Dick, who had crept out from under the bed unnoticed, that knocked him fairly breathless. Following up his advantage, Dick grappled with Sam and threw him on the floor. Dazed and badly frightened at the

unexpected onslaught, Sam could only gasp and Dick had him bound and a piece of the sheet stuffed into his mouth before he had time to collect his scattered senses.

In the meantime Pepper and Monkey had grappled with each other, each striving to throw the other, and were so intent on what they were doing that neither had taken any notice of the struggle between Dick and Sam. As soon as Dick had made Sam secure he turned to where Pepper and Monkey were swaying back and forth and drew a stout strip of a sheet across Monkey's face before he had time to make any outcry.

"Quick, tie him up," he cried.

"W-w-what!" gasped Pepper.

"Tie him up!" directed Dick, "and be quick about it, too."

Pepper needed no second admonition and in a trice the two of them had Monkey securely bound and gagged.

"G-g-good thing we learned to m-m-make knots," stammered Pepper. "G-g-guess he won't g-get out of them without help."

"Now let's see if we cannot get out of this," went on Dick. Blowing out the candle they hurriedly left the room. "Guess they'll be kind

of surprised when they find who they have got there in the morning. Now if we can only find the front door."

Groping along the hall they came to a stairway, down which they felt their way. They had nearly got to the bottom when there came a loud pounding and cries for help from the room from which they had escaped.

"Come along, one of them has gotten loose," whispered Dick, "but perhaps we can get down before they find out what is the matter."

But the noise had been heard and the men came rushing out from the kitchen.

"What is going on up there?" demanded the leader angrily.

"Oh, those boys want to get out, I suppose," replied one of the men.

"Well, go up there and shut them up," he commanded. "Where is Monkey and Sam?" he was heard to ask a moment later.

"Don't know," replied the man; "they were here a moment ago."

"This is some of their work," he went on. "Look here, Rae, if you can't keep that brat of yours out of mischief I'll send you and him back where you came from."

With a muttered reply and a half smothered objuration Rae, with the other men, started for the floor above.

When the men came up the stairs Pepper and Dick retreated back through the hall, trying the doors as they went until they found one which was unlocked. Opening the door, which, fortunately, swung without any noise, the boys slipped into the room, closed the door again and waited until the men had gone by. When they had passed the boys came out of the room and started down the stairs, but found to their dismay that some of the men, including the leader, were still standing in the hall below.

"What are we going to do now?" whispered Pepper; "we can't get down that way."

"We will have to wait until they go away."

But the men who had gone upstairs had learned of the conditions existing there, had discovered their escape and were coming down again, searching the different rooms as they came.

"They can't have got away," they heard one of the men say. "They must be in the house somewhere."

"How did they get together in the same room?" asked another.

"Don't ask me," returned the first speaker. "I had them both locked in tight and they'd 'a' been there yet if it hadn't 'a' been for these dashed kid fools kicking up a fight. Get along with you," driving Monkey and Sam ahead of him. "Look in all the rooms, they are somewhere around."

"Maybe they got out of the window," suggested one of the men.

"No, they didn't," growled Rae. "The boys say they went out of the door."

"And the outside-door is securely locked," said another, "so they are in the house all right."

"Then we've good as got them," which assurance was, the boys thought, deplorably true, but they would not surrender while there was a chance of escape.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INSANE ASYLUM

LOOKING into all the rooms as they came to them, the searchers examined the third floor.

"They are not on this floor," determined one of the men when they had finished.

"Then we will find them on the floor below," said Rae. "Try all the rooms there."

"How about the other one?" asked the man.

"Oh, he's safe enough," replied Rae. "He can't get out, but we will take a look at him as we go by."

"That must be Mr. Royce," whispered Pepper. "I wonder where he is."

But the men were coming down the stairs by this time and the boys retreated along the hall.

"What shall we do now?" whispered Pepper, the noise made by the men as they tramped over the floor drowning their voices.

"Keep a going," answered Dick, still retreating. The men came on, stopping to look into

each room as they passed along. There was one door near the end of the hall which it appeared from the time it took to open was securely locked and here the men paused for a little time while they made sure a prisoner who was confined in that room had not escaped.

"He's all right," remarked Rae as the door was locked again. "As long as we've him it don't make so much difference about the others."

"That's nonsense. If they get away they will be bringing the police down on us and we must make a quick getaway."

"Oh, they can't get away," returned Rae. "Even if they got outside they couldn't get through the swamp."

"I guess that's right, too," replied the other.

Still keeping ahead of the men the boys had come to a small flight of steps leading down to the back building, which was several feet lower than the main structure and down which Dick nearly stumbled in the darkness, but catching himself in time to warn Pepper. Following along this hall they discovered at the end another narrower flight which lead to the upper story.

"Gee! this is handy," whispered Pepper. "We can keep on going around all night."

Going upstairs once more they found themselves in another hall, along which they groped until they struck an open door, through which they entered into a large room. Groping about they found that it contained a bed.

"Let's get under the bed for a temporary hiding place," suggested Pepper; "maybe they won't look there."

Creeping under the bed they lay quiet, scarcely daring to breathe, while the search went on apace. Steps were heard passing and repassing the door, but, oddly enough, no one came in.

"They must have got out of the house somehow," they overheard one of the men say as he went by.

"Turn the dog loose," directed the man whom the others had called captain and who was now taking part in the search. "He'll soon pick up the trail. And keep all the outer doors locked so if they are in the house they can't get out. We'll hunt them out by daylight."

The sound of the searchers presently died away and Pepper and Dick finally crept out from under the bed. Looking from the window they could see lights moving about on the outside and hear the baying of the dog.

"Well, I guess we're safe for a little while," said Pepper.

"But we don't seem to have got very far," replied Dick. "I wonder what part of the house we are in."

"Well, w-w-what do you t-think of t-t-that?" gasped Pepper when Dick lit a match, which he carefully shaded by his hand, and they looked about the room. "W-we're just where we s-s-started from."

"That explains it. That's why they didn't come in here," decided Dick. "It's lucky that we stumbled in here, though I don't know how we did it."

"I w-w-wonder if we have been out of it," said Pepper.

"Looks as if we had been," replied Dick, "from the row going on down there," looking from the window.

"W-what next?" asked Pepper.

"Try it again," answered Dick. "We will wait until things quiet down a bit and then we will slide down the rope and be off."

Having readjusted the pieces of bed clothes, part of which they had used in their ineffectual efforts to secure Monkey and his chum, they

again formed a rope which they thought was long enough to reach or nearly reach the ground. Then they sat down to wait until the place was quiet again and the crowd had gone to sleep. But they were more tired themselves than they had realized and in a little while they were both fast asleep.

Dick was the first to awake. Rubbing his eyes he looked about him, wondering half dreamily where he was; then as the remembrance came to him he jumped to his feet.

"It is time we were getting away," he thought, then striking a match he glanced at his watch. "Only twelve o'clock. Seems as if it must be near morning. Time enough yet. Now I wonder." Going to the window he looked out. "Seems to be all quiet below. Guess they must all be asleep." Then he stood musing for a moment and half whispered, "I believe I'll try it."

Going to the door he cautiously opened it and then paused and listened for any sound that might indicate that there was any one on the watch, but there was not the slightest sound. Going back into the room he lit another match and looked at Pepper, who was still sleeping soundly. He was about to arouse him, but

stopped and then went out of the room. Moving as noiselessly as a shadow he groped his way along the hall until he came to the stairs at the back, down which he descended, still without making a noise and pausing frequently to listen.

In this silent way he crept down the other stairs and through the lower hall until he came to where he judged was the door of the room where the other prisoner was.

"This will tell the story," he mused as he hesitated a moment in front of the door. "If there is any one around it is all off, but it is worth risking."

Striking a match, which he shaded with his hand, he let it burn for an instant and then blew it out, the whole being done so quickly that it seemed but a flash, but it was still long enough to show him that he was at the right door. Making no move he listened intently for several minutes, but there was nothing to indicate that he had been seen or heard.

The most difficult part of his task, he felt, had been accomplished. Satisfied that there was no one around Dick set to work upon the lock, which, although stout and strong, was an old-fashioned mortise lock, operated by a large key,

and it was not difficult to open. Dick, even though working in the dark, quickly had the bolt thrown back and was soon inside the room.

"What do you want?" demanded the occupant of the room as he entered.

"Shs!" whispered Dick. "I am Dick Wilson. I have come to help you escape. Shs —" as the man was about to speak. "Don't say anything, but put on your clothes and follow me. I think you are Mr. Royce, but anyhow I am going to help you to get away from here."

In a remarkably short space of time the prisoner was ready to accompany his liberator.

With the man following closely behind him Dick went out of the room, closing the door and shooting the bolt of the lock again. Then he lead the way up to the room where Pepper was still sleeping soundly.

After closing and bolting the door Dick touched Pepper lightly on the shoulder.

"W-w-what is it?" cried Pepper, starting up.

"Time to be getting away, Pepper," replied Dick. "It seems to be all quiet below, but I think we had better try the window route."

"All right, I'm ready," responded Pepper. "B-but, I s-s-say, who have you got there?"



PEPPER GOES DOWN THE ROPE.

Canadian Rockies.

"It's Mr. Royce," replied Dick. "Don't stop to talk," as Pepper was about to make some remark. "We want to get away. Now, who will go down first?"

"I don't know whether I can get down that way or not," said Mr. Royce, "but I am willing to try."

"Better let Pepper go first," suggested Dick. "He is the lightest and we can see how he makes out."

The rope had been tied to the bedstead and without stopping for any argument Pepper got over the balcony railing and went down the rope, disappearing in the darkness below.

"He got down all right," communicated Dick a moment later, when the rope was shaken from beneath. "Now you had better try it."

Climbing over the railing Mr. Royce now grasped the rope and slid down. The many knots aided materially, preventing him from going too fast, and he soon found himself on the ground, where Pepper was waiting and where Dick speedily joined them.

"So far, so good. Now which way shall we go?" asked Pepper as soon as they were clear of the building.

"Have you any idea where we are?" asked Mr. Royce.

"No," replied Pepper, "all I know is that when we came we came up to the front of the house."

"Then I think it would be better to go the other way," advised Mr. Royce. "If they are hunting for you they have probably gone that way."

"The river is over to the East," said Dick. "I think that we ought to work over that way."

"That is a good plan," agreed Mr. Royce, "if we have any idea where the East is."

"There is the North star," replied Pepper, "so it must be over to the right," starting off in the direction he had indicated.

There was a heavy wood in the direction they were going, in which they speedily became lost, as it was intensely dark beneath the trees and they could scarcely make their way between them.

"I think," said Mr. Royce at length when they had wandered along until they were thoroughly tired, "that we had better stop and wait until daylight. It cannot be very far off now. I don't feel as if I could go any farther."

"Here is the trunk of a fallen tree," called

Dick, who was in advance. "We can sit on this and rest until daylight comes."

"Will you tell us, Mr. Royce, how you were made a prisoner by the gang?"

"A very simple procedure," was the reply. "Briefly, I was out walking along a country road, when a farmer driving a wagon passed. He turned and asked if I did not want a ride, and feeling fatigued I accepted his invitation. Soon we passed through a rather thick wood and all of a sudden I found myself attacked from the rear and made prisoner. They brought me to the old asylum where you found me. Their ostensible object seems to have been a search of my papers. They found nothing of service to them."

Pepper then related their adventures and between the interchange of experiences whiled away the hours.

"Aren't you sleepy, boys?" asked Mr. Royce.

"I'm not," responded Pepper, "but, gee! if we only had something to eat."

CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH THE SWAMP

THE woods were so heavy and dense that it was a long time before it became light enough to see. As they looked about them at the mass of tangled underbrush, fallen trees, vines that were all around them, it was a matter of wonderment to them all how they had ever gotten through in the darkness, for it was hardly possible to make a passage in the light.

They were hungry and thirsty and the prospect was not inviting, but they came before long to a little stream of water and a refreshing drink greatly restored their courage.

"If we follow the stream," said Pepper, "it will bring us out somewhere on the river and perhaps we can locate our boat. Then it will be an easy matter to get back."

"Pepper, you're a born scout," declared Dick. "You take the lead and we will follow, and if we don't get somewhere it won't be your fault."

But even with the increasing light the way was difficult, the stream wound and twisted on its course and they were often obliged to make wide detours around impenetrable thickets and spend weary time in seeking for the stream again, and so, with frequent stops, to enable Mr. Royce to rest, they forced a passage through the woods, until Dick, who was in the lead, came upon a trail.

"Hurrah, here is a path that leads somewhere!" he called joyfully.

"Gee, I'm glad of that," responded Pepper; "I was afraid we were never going to get out of here. Get along as fast as you can. It ought to bring us out of the woods."

The path, although it was little more than an Indian trail, lead down through a small hollow, on each side of which the ground was low and marshy, but it was easy traveling, compared with what they had gone through, and they went along quite rapidly.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Pepper when they had gone some distance and the woods were beginning to grow lighter, "we shall soon be out of this."

But at that moment there came behind them

the bay of a dog, which, seemingly, had caught their trail.

"The only thing we can do is to keep on," decided Pepper, plunging into the marsh which in spots was ankle deep with mud and water. There was here and there the trunk of a fallen tree over which they were obliged to climb, or a thick tuft of bushes which they were compelled to go around. And all the time the bay of the hound was growing louder.

The marsh now became still softer, the ground oozed with slush and they could hardly drag their feet from the mud. They were now in the water much of the time and mud below sucked at them as though it would drag them into its depths.

"Keep on," urged Mr. Royce, "there is higher ground ahead and we must get out of this."

Pushing on, they continued a hundred feet or more before getting away from the swamp. But they now came to patches of solid ground. Gaining one of these patches they stopped to rest for a time before pressing on. They had scarcely stopped when they heard the bay of the dog almost upon them. He was evidently following a path which avoided the morasses through which they had made their way. They

could hear him crashing through the bushes and the voice of a man urging him on.

The dog was soon in plain sight, running with his head low, dashing along a narrow pathway, and in a moment more it seemed he would be upon them.

"Oh, if I only had my gun!" exclaimed Pepper.

"Never you mind," said Dick with a grim smile, "I always go armed."

Saying this, Dick had taken his sling, which he always carried with him, from his pocket, and waiting for an opportune moment he sent a stone full force at the dog, striking it fortunately, so accurate was his aim and so excellent his skill, squarely on the head. The force of the blow was not great enough to seriously injure the dog, but it was powerful enough to cause the animal to stagger, stunned, and, losing its balance, topple over into the slime of the bog.

With a despairing howl it went over. It fell into the oozy mass and was rapidly sinking beneath the surface when the man who was following came upon the scene. With a shout the individual, who was apparently the owner of the dog, sprang forward and catching the animal

by the collar endeavored to drag it from the morass. This he was not able to do and might have fallen into the mire himself if a companion had not come to his rescue, catching him and pulling him back. By their united efforts they succeeded in dragging the dog from the slimy mass that was sucking it down.

The boys did not wait to learn the result. As soon as the dog fell they, with Mr. Royce, hurried along the pathway which they had had so fortunately called to their attention. It was a narrow ridge of earth grown thick with reeds and bushes, a little above the elevation of the marsh and wound tortuously through the swamp. It was slow and tedious traveling, but they were greatly relieved to find that with the plunging of the dog into the morass, all sounds of pursuit had ceased.

At times it was difficult to push their way through the brush, but they pressed on, and presently arrived upon firmer ground. After this the way was less difficult and in a short time they came out upon the bank at the edge of the river.

"I wonder," said Dick, "if we can find our boat again."

"I am afraid that it would be hopeless to at-

tempt to rescue it," answered Mr. Royce. "The men who took you prisoners probably have had your boat hid away. The only thing we can do is to signal any passing boats."

"There is one out there now," said Pepper; "maybe they will take us off."

"I wonder if they will understand our signal," queried Dick, waving his handkerchief, which was answered from the boat.

"Try them with the code," suggested Pepper; "maybe they can read that."

"Help! Help!" signaled Dick.

"Hurrah!" cried Pepper when the signals were returned, "they do understand it. Isn't that great. Must be some boy Scouts up here."

The boat was now headed for the spot where they were standing.

"We are all right now," went on Pepper, energetically waving his handkerchief.

But at this instant two men who were armed with guns appeared a short distance down the river and were rapidly coming toward them. As they saw the boat headed toward the shore they broke into a run.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Pepper.

"We cannot do anything but submit," replied Mr. Royce. "I am not able to go any farther and they would easily overtake us if we tried to run away."

"We can signal the party in the boat who we are," suggested Pepper, "and they can send us help."

Taking his handkerchief, Pepper began spelling out, "This is Mr. Royce," when there came from the boat, which was now running in close and coming at full speed, a sharp, shrill whistle and the report of a gun.

At the sound of the whistle the two men, who were now almost upon the fugitives, stopped and, quickly turning, ran back as fast as they could go.

"Well, what do you think of that!" exclaimed Pepper. "I thought we were in for a tussle for sure. But what do you suppose made them change their minds?"

"Guess they thought they didn't want us after all," decided Dick.

But the mystery was explained when they again turned to the boat, which after a few moments ran up on the beach and a policeman in uniform jumped off. There were others in the boat whom the trio were most happy to welcome.

"They got away from us that time," said the uniformed man, "but we will get them yet."

"I certainly think you came just in the nick of time," said Mr. Royce, as he came forward to greet Colonel Snow. "But I don't see how you happened to be around at this particular time and place."

"We followed these boys' trail," replied the Colonel, "but I am yet to learn what they were doing here."

"Oh, we followed Monkey and Sam Tompkins," replied Pepper, "and fell into a trap. But, as you see, we got out again."

"And brought me out with them," added Mr. Royce. "I didn't know that I was ever going to get out again."

The six boys were exchanging congratulations and salutations without other thought at the moment.

"All aboard," called the captain, "if you want to get back to town to-day."

"I say, you haven't got anything to eat aboard, have you?" demanded Pepper, getting into the boat.

"That is something we forgot," said the Colonel.

"Then you can't get back any too soon for me," responded Pepper.

As there was no occasion for delay, and explanations could be made on the boat as well as on shore, the party was soon on board and the craft was headed for the city. The run was quickly made and the entire party reunited.

Immediately upon their return to Winnipeg the pursuit of Rae and his companions was taken up by the police, but when they reached the old asylum they found that the men had evidently taken the alarm and had disappeared, leaving no trace. In the meantime the Colonel, with three of the boys, had gone westward to the point where they forsook the railroad and then had advanced into the wild country where they were to take up the search for the mine.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE NORTH WOOD

“**W**HAT does he say?” asked Pepper, who had been listening to a conversation, not one word of which could he understand.

“He reports,” replied the Colonel, “that Red Feather has gone to the happy hunting ground these many, many moons.”

The Colonel, with Pepper, Jack and Donald, was standing just outside of a many-roomed log structure in the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains. He was talking to a young Indian brave, who was arrayed in his most gorgeous dress. The latter was now the chief of the Indian village, where, some years before, the Colonel had found his way after escaping from the forest fire.

The house, which was the most suitable abode of any size near the region in which the Uncas Mine was supposed to be located, had been placed at the disposal of Mr. Royce by the owner, Major Carleton.

It had been the original intention that, as soon as the party had assembled at Winnipeg, the Royces should come here, where Mrs. Royce could remain with Nellie and Alice while Mr. Royce prosecuted his search for the mine. But the machinations of Rae had changed all their plans. Mr. Royce had been greatly prostrated by his experiences while in the hands of his captors, for they had endeavored in various ways to force from him the secret of the way to the mine, which he was supposed to possess. They had given him barely enough food to keep him alive in the hope of breaking him down, so that after his rescue by the boys' aid, it was some days before he would be able to make the journey as far as Prospect, the nearest railroad town.

It had therefore been decided that Colonel Snow, with Jack, Pepper and Donald, should go on to the house and get it in readiness, and the others would follow later. This was the more important, as it was now the season when the Indians came in from the mountains to exchange their pelts and furs for the white man's goods, and when it would be possible to obtain a guide to the Indian village from which point the search would be prosecuted. The Colonel had been for-

fortunate, indeed, to meet at Prospect members of a band from the very village known to, and with whom Mr. Deane had lived on his trips to and from the mine. They were about to return to their village and the Colonel, with Jack, Pepper and Donald, would go with them, the other boys, too, if they arrived in time, and word was sent for them to hurry forward. The division of forces at Winnipeg had been by lot, which was not to say that those to constitute the "home guard" were entirely satisfied, but at least there was no grumbling and there would be much of novelty and interest to occupy them.

"Who was Red Feather?" continued Pepper.

"He was chief of the village when I was there," replied the Colonel, "and this is his son, Dancing Light."

"Gee," exclaimed Pepper, "that is a fancy name all right."

"I ascertain," continued the Colonel, "that the party is all through with their trading, and that just as soon as we can get ready, they will start back."

"We are certainly fortunate," said Jack.

"Yes," the Colonel replied, and then continued, "Dancing Light and his party are stay-

ing with another Indian tribe at Red Deer. We will visit them."

"How are we going to travel?" asked Donald, most interested in the trip.

"By canoe," said the Colonel. "They have come up through Rocky River, and they will go back the same way for a distance."

"Shall we go in their canoes?" asked Pepper.

"We may have a canoe of our own. That is not arranged yet."

"When will we start?" asked Jack.

"On Monday," replied the Colonel. "This is Saturday. You want to take a good rest, for we have a long, hard journey ahead of us."

As the Colonel finished speaking, Dancing Light made a short guttural response, then turning, walked away over the fields at a pace that speedily carried him out of their sight.

"Where is he going now?" asked Pepper.

"Back to Red Deer," replied the Colonel. "He came from the camp this morning, and he will be back again before dark."

"Why, that is all together sixty miles!" cried Pepper. "He won't expect us to do that in one day, will he?"

"I think we would do very well if we made fifteen miles a day on foot, that is, at the outset," replied the Colonel.

"In my opinion," remarked Donald, "we might easily do worse."

"I don't think there is any doubt about that," laughed the Colonel; "it will be just as well to take matters easily until we are thrown on our own resources."

"Where do we go on Monday?" asked Jack.

"We will go by wagon to Red Deer," replied the Colonel. "It is likely that we can hold the Indians there for two or three days, although Dancing Light is anxious to go on at once. But we shall have to get our outfit."

"Then you won't be able to wait until Mr. Royce and the boys get here."

"I fear it will not be practical. If we did we might not get off this Summer. It may be sometime before Mr. Royce will be able to make the journey and our Indian friends won't wait for us."

"Then if we are going on Monday we ought to be getting busy," broke in Pepper.

"Over what?" asked Donald.

"Getting ready," replied Pepper.

"That won't take very long," said the Colonel. "You don't want to take anything that you can do without."

"What about clothes?" asked Jack.

"We will adopt the Indian fashion. You will take a couple of woolen shirts, a change of underclothing and the best thing for outside wear will be buckskin leggings and a buckskin coat."

"Gee!" cried Pepper, "that will be great. We will look like a Wild West Show."

As the Colonel had said, it did not take long for the boys to make all their preparations, cleaning and oiling their rifles, with which each one was provided, putting up a supply of ammunition and packing away their other belongings against their return. The remainder of the time they spent in wandering about, talking with the men on the ranch and picking up what information they could about the region into which they were going.

At daylight on Monday morning, after a hearty breakfast, the start was made for Red Deer, where they arrived in the early afternoon, having stopped and had dinner while the horses rested at noon. As soon as they had shaken off some of the dust of their thirty mile ride

they went to the Indian encampment which was a short distance out of the settlement.

The wigwams were scattered about in random fashion, and before each of them a fire was burning. The women and girls were engaged in various camp duties. As soon as they came near to the camp the shaggy wolf-like dogs rushed madly forward, as if they would tear them to pieces, yelping in a long, drawn bay, strikingly suggestive of the howl of the animal from which they get their distinctive name. At the command of Dancing Light, who, with two others of the tribe came forward to greet the visitors, the dogs slunk reluctantly back.

Some of the women disappeared in the wigwams, and the children hid themselves in the tall grass where they peered out at the boys, but the rest of the camp seemingly paid no attention to them whatever.

"Bo' jôu," exclaimed the Colonel in greeting, a salutation which the Indians returned.

While the boys looked on with intense interest, taking in all the details of the scene about them, the Colonel conversed with the Indians in their own language. This jargon, for such it seemed to the listeners, he had learned some

years before. Arrangements were completed satisfactorily, he soon reported, for the trip into the Indian country, but they would have to go at once.

"Come, boys," said the Colonel when he had talked for some time, "we will go back to the settlement now and get supper. You want to make the most of it," he added, "while you are here, for it is likely it will be a long time before you will get any civilized meals again."

"All the better," cried Pepper. "Life in the open for me. Just all the sky above me, and just all the earth below."

"A very pretty sentiment," said the Colonel.

"When do we set out?" asked Jack.

"On Wednesday morning. It ought to be a very interesting trip for you boys."

"Is it all arranged then?"

"Yes, but as the river is difficult with many rapids and portages instead of traveling in our own canoes we will go in theirs, two of us in a canoe with two Indians to manage it."

After their supper, as there was little of interest to be seen in the neighborhood and they were tired after their ride, the boys were quickly off to bed to dream of the many wonderful ad-

ventures in store for them. The next day was spent in procuring an outfit and supplies for the journey. After having arranged for getting from the Indian camp a suit of buckskin for each of the boys, with a supply of moccasins, which the squaws were to cut and change to fit them, the Colonel set about procuring the other necessary equipment for the trip.

Beside the hunter's knife with which each one was provided, there were a couple of small steel traps, two small meshed fish-nets, fishing lines and hooks, a galvanized iron pail, frying pan, coffee pot, tin plates and cups, and two axes. To these were added matches, a flint and steel against a possible need, woolen and rubber blankets. For provisions, there were a sack of flour, several pounds of coffee and a half a dozen sides of bacon. Beyond this they would live on the country they traveled through.

The start was made in the early morning. In the one canoe, with Dancing Light in the bow and an Indian brave in the stern, Pepper and the Colonel took their places, while in another, in which Rainy Wind, an old chief, was in the bow, Jack and Donald had a place. A strong push sent the canoes into the stream and the de-

scent of the river was begun. For some distance their course was clear and they ran along easily with the current, making rapid progress. After a couple of hours they came to the first rapid of considerable size. Here the Indians were forced to drop their paddles and to use the long spruce poles with which they were provided.

Dancing Light stood gracefully upright in the bow, his feet apart, leaning back against the pressure, guiding the boat through the fast moving current. After a brief interval the canoe reached the point of hardest suction, where the swirling waters broke over the descent. It seemed to the youthful voyagers that a catastrophe must ensue, but they felt no fear. The young chief, taking a full breath, exerted all his strength, his aid, poised in the stern, steadying the craft, while his companion secured a fresh control. The boys watched with admiration the skill of the Indians in their work, all of which was done with the ease and certainty of a long experience. The canoe, skillfully guided from the water's engulfing clutch, shot into the rippling water below. The Indians shook the spray from their poles and calmly resumed paddling.

CHAPTER XVI

A WORTHY SHOT

AT noon they stopped for dinner. One of the Indians quickly sought out a dead, white birch and, gathering a handful of decayed, half-powdered wood, dry as tinder and almost as inflammable, touched it with a match and promptly there followed a blaze. Upon this he laid some pieces of bark from the tree which burned almost as readily. Upon this he piled pieces of wood from fallen branches and the fire was ready for the cooking of the meal. Coffee was made and bacon was roasted on the end of sticks. Bread they had brought with them, and some wild strawberries, so sweet that the lack of sugar was not regretted, made a fine repast. For an hour they rested and then resumed their course and traveled all the afternoon, the Indians doing but little more than keeping the canoe headed in the proper direction, the current carrying them steadily along.

At nightfall, a camp sight was selected, and preparations made for the evening meal. A large fire was built and its warmth was not uncomfortable, for there was a chill in the air even in the summer season.

All the various expedients of the Indians were closely watched by the boys. One stretched a net across the mouth of a small stream. Another went in search of likely spots in which to set their traps for musk-rats and to place snares for rabbits and birds.

It was but a little while before the camp took on the appearance of a settled habitation: the kettle began to bubble, the roasting fish, just caught from the stream, to turn brown, and the odor of the cooking to permeate the air.

"Whew!" exclaimed Pepper, who had been watching the preparations with interest, "but that smells good, I feel as if I could eat the whole meal myself."

"Better watch them closely," suggested the Colonel; "you can learn much that may be helpful to you later on."

"They certainly know how to do things in a shipshape way," replied Pepper. "I begin to feel as if I didn't know anything about it."

Just how good that meal was no one can ever know, till they have had opportunity to partake of such a feast under similar circumstances. Then the delight of the hours that follow; the dreamy, soothing influence of the early night and the sound and restful slumber to follow.

In the morning it was found that several rabbits had been caught in the snares, and the nets turned out a goodly supply of pickerel. These, with the provisions brought with them, were ample for the day. When the camp had been struck, the journey was resumed. The chance of securing game was never overlooked, and a shot now and then announced an addition to their larder.

After an hour or two of easy travel with the current of the stream, they came to the junction with another arm of the river, up which they must force their way in the direction of the mountain fastness where lay their objective point, the hoped-for mine.

The day went in much the same fashion as the one before, except that steady paddling was necessary, and the boys took turns at the work. After a little teaching, they did so well as to win the approval of the red men. They had

been traveling for some hours when sudden excitement developed in the leading canoe. The first one contained the older warrior. He had stopped and was floated back until his boat was behind a bend, thickly grown with grass and bushes, which they were just about rounding. The other canoe was similarly handled and in a moment they were all floating back down the stream, drifting along noiselessly without lifting their paddles from the water.

"What is it?" asked Pepper excitedly.

"The old Indian has seen some kind of game around the bend," replied the Colonel. "It is a bear," he added, when he had exchanged a few words with Dancing Light. "Two of them are going to land and make a simultaneous attack from the front and rear, perform a flank movement as it were."

When the Indians had gotten to a point that seemed sufficiently remote from the quarry, Rainy Wind ran his craft on to the shore and, with his mate, plunged noiselessly and stealthily into the woods. Dancing Light then paddled ahead once more.

Jack and Donald had been bidden to stay by the canoe, but such a scheme did not find favor

in their minds, and in a moment they were in hot pursuit, albeit moving quietly in cat-like semblance of the Indians themselves. They followed at some distance, and although they strained their eyes and ears they were unable to detect the slightest movement ahead of them, or discern the least noise. While Rainy Wind was stalking the game the other canoe was paddled up the river in the direction of the bear, which, in the shade of some bushes, was wallowing in the cool, sweet smelling rushes, comfortably unconscious of the movements and objects of his enemy.

It was a marvel to Pepper how surely, yet secretly, the advance was made. Not the slightest sound that he could detect was made on land or water.

When the boat was quite close upon the great beast, the animal for the first time became aware of its proximity. Still he showed no fear, only curiosity, and stood furtively examining the oncoming canoe.

Then, while still at a safe distance, the Indian raised his gun and fired, and at the same instant those concealed on the shore shot at him. With the shock of many bullets in him, the bear

fell, snarling, infuriated by the pain, and biting at the underbrush, but a second later he was erect again and, turning, lunged up the bank and into the woods. He was badly, if not seriously, wounded and thoroughly scared by the unexpected onslaught from the rear. He plunged ahead now, regardless of what was before him. This was entirely unexpected to the Indians who were the attacking party. His companion had proved lighter of foot, but before Rainy Water could get out of the way, the bear was right upon him.

As he dashed frantically forward, he came directly toward the old brave, a furious, desperate animal. The Indian attempted to move backward, and would have successfully evaded the onslaught, but that he tripped over a fallen tree trunk and all but fell as the bear dashed at him. A shout of warning came from the other Indian. He tried to get a shot at the bear, the while calling to the others in the canoe for aid. Rapidly the boat was propelled, but the underbrush partly shut off the view of the tragedy which it seemed was about to be enacted. None of them could get near enough to render any effective aid and anyway, it appeared impossible

to shoot the bear without at the same time shooting the chief.

Donald and Jack were near at hand and hearing the commotion, had hurried forward. They came upon the scene as the bear made his dash for the Indian and, without hesitating, Donald raised his rifle and fired. It was a daring deed and a venturesome one. All praise to those who act with promptness in emergencies like this. The bear dropped, collapsing in a heap at the feet of the fallen tribe man.

"I sure believe you killed him," cried Jack.

The Indian rose a little unsteadily to a perpendicular and a short but intense pause of absolute silence followed.

"That was a fortunate shot, Donald," said the Colonel at length; "I don't see how you dared do it. We couldn't see any chance of getting in a shot there."

"Gee!" cried Pepper. "You stood a good chance of wiping out his ribs as well as the bear."

"A miss is as good as a mile," rejoined Donald soberly, but with a tone of exultation in his voice.

The Indians gathered about the bear to ex-

amine it in respectful silence. To them it was wonderful shooting, but it was rather a specimen of wonderful luck that Donald would never likely have happen again. When the bear had been thoroughly examined, the Indians came up to Donald and each addressed to him a word or two in the Indian tongue to which Donald listened in dubious doubt and wonder.

"What are they talking about?" asked Pepper, when the last of them had had his say.

"They are calling him little brother," replied the Colonel. "They are adopting him into the tribe. He is a full fledged Indian now."

"Gracious!" cried Pepper. "Won't he look fine when he gets his Sunday-go-to-meeting suit on."

"All hail, 'Donald-Kill-the-Bear,'" called Jack.

"Better call him 'Great Scott,'" laughed Pepper.

"In my opinion," began Donald, "it's time to reload my gun."

CHAPTER XVII

JACK IS SUSPICIOUS

TAKING up now the carcass of the bear, the four Indians began dragging it down to the shore. There the great body was fastened by its stretched out paws to the branches of low growing trees and the process of skinning began. Whatever of the selected meat that would not be eaten within a day or two was cut into thin strips and hung across poles to dry, for nothing would be wasted. Donald was to have the skin as a memento of his brave act.

There was no further traveling to be done that day. A feast of rejoicing was to take its place, and the boys were to have their first meal of freshly killed bear steak. At home it might not masquerade as a luxury, for it was found to be a bit tough, but with appetites born of rugged out-door life, it was voted "*bearable*."

A heavy rain late that afternoon was fraught with new experiences, albeit the production of

much discomfort, but the Indians who were most exposed seemed the least to care. They went about their duties, replenishing the fire, cooking the evening meal, their garments as wet as if they had fallen into the river, yet stoically indifferent.

Although the tent furnished an ample covering, the ground was soaking. Their clothes and blankets were damp, even with the protection of their rubber ponchos, but at last the night was over, a brightly shining sun awoke them to new animation and thirst for adventure.

The stream up which they journeyed had now become narrowed and tortuous, there had been many diminutive rapids, which were difficult to navigate, but early this day they were confronted with a waterfall full a hundred feet in height. Rounding a bend in the stream, a beautiful sight met their gaze.

"Gee!" cried Pepper, "have we got to sail up that?"

"Have we got to the end of the journey?" asked Jack.

"Not yet," replied the Colonel; "we have come to a portage."

"A portage," exclaimed Pepper; "what and where is it?"

This was a question that he might well ask, for they seemed almost shut in by the banks on either side and the waterfall in front of them. The boats were run into an inlet and beached. The trail, if such it could be called, struck off to the left through a thick wood heavily overgrown with saplings, up a steep hill over rockstrewn, moss-covered table land to come back to the river again a half a mile away. The trail was one that only one experienced in woodcraft could have detected, but to the Indians it was as plain as a road to the dweller in peopled countries.

The canoes were emptied of their contents which were laid about. Each one took up such a share of the burden as they could master, the stronger Indians carrying as much as a hundred pounds at a load. Then the canoes were carried up and in a little time they were once more afloat. On the portage the boys carried their own things, which, although of no great weight, they found all they cared to handle.

In this way the journey went on, and several times they had to stop and carry the canoes

around some impassable spot until on the third day they came to a smaller stream up which they went for several miles, when the canoes were headed for the bank and the shouts of the Indians announced that the journey was at an end. The Indians were back at their home.

"Well, boys," said Colonel Snow, the day after their arrival at the Indian village, "are you ready now to go on a hunt?"

"What are we going after this time, more bears?" asked Pepper.

"I think we will see if we can't get on the track of a moose," replied the Colonel. "Are there any moose about?" he asked, turning to Dancing Light, who was standing near by.

"But I thought —" broke in Pepper, his mind centered on their expedition's object.

"Think again, Pepper," interposed Jack in a warning tone, whereupon Pepper taking a second grasp of the situation kept his thoughts to himself.

The boys and their guides had become very friendly, for the Indians, since the killing of the bear by Donald, appeared to no longer regard them as strangers, but almost as part of the

tribe. The boys were trying to learn something of their language, and many of the words they could now understand. In this Jack was the most proficient, and could, with the aid of signs, manage to make himself understood in simple matters. Generally, however, the Colonel must needs act as interpreter.

"The moose since the white men came have gone away to the land of snow," replied the Indian to a query.

"Meaning that they have gone farther North," the Colonel explained. "Isn't there a trail about here that they take in going from the North to the South?"

"No more," replied Dancing Light. "In the time of the old men there was such a trail but there are no moose to travel it now."

"Is that?" began Pepper, but a warning glance from Jack checked him again.

The object of their presence in the region had been kept secret from everyone, it not having been told even to Dancing Light. This, not for any doubt of the Indian, but the Colonel had reason to believe that their enemies had not given up the search after their failure to get the secret from Mr. Royce at Winnipeg but might be still

watching and following them. While it was possible that they might not suspect the Colonel of taking up the search it was still wise to keep it to themselves and let it appear that they were merely out on a hunting trip.

"Do you know where the trail was?" continued the Colonel.

"No!" answered Dancing Light, "but some of the old men may; perhaps Rainy Wind."

"Hello!" interrupted Pepper, "I wonder who that is?"

Pepper's exclamation was called forth by the loud bay-like barking of the dogs as they rushed forth to intercept a man in the dress of a trapper, who had issued from the woods to the right of the camp. Snapping and snarling as though they would tear him to pieces, the dogs dashed at this man, who, unconcernedly struck at them with a short stick that he carried, driving them back toward the camp.

"Bo' jou!" he called as he came in.

"Bo' jou!" replied the Indian who was nearest to him, but paying no further attention.

The man now laid the pack he carried upon the ground and came over to where the Colonel and the boys were standing.

"Good morning," said the newcomer, his manner genially free and easy.

"Good morning," responded the Colonel and the boys.

The man was tall, stoutly built, and dressed in the usual costume of the trapper. He had a shrewd, intelligent face, and an easy, careless way with him that showed he was accustomed to living an independent life, and was eminently capable of taking care of himself.

"Hunting?" he asked, with a questioning glance at the boys.

"Only for pleasure," replied the Colonel. "We are hoping to bag a moose."

"Not much chance of that, I reckon," he replied. "Since you hunters have come up here there ain't many of them left."

"What are you hunting?" asked Jack.

"Oh, I'm trapping," replied the man; "looking for skins, if there is anything left after these blamed Indians get through," he added in a low voice, then in a natural tone, "May I ask your name?"

The Colonel answered him and asked his in return.

"Oh, I'm DeOrr, Frederick DeOrr," he re-

plied. "Had a funny experience just below here. An old trapper asked my name. 'DeOrr,' I said. 'D or what?' he questioned. 'Not D. or what, just Frederick DeOrr,' and again he said, 'D. or what.'" He laughed uproariously at his joke, slapping Jack on the shoulder. The recipient of the cordiality did not seem very greatly pleased.

DeOrr walked away now to talk with the Indians, whose language he evidently understood.

During the interval Dancing Light had left the party and now returned with Rainy Wind.

"The trail of the moose," he said without any prelude, "Rainy Wind says, was of the olden time and lies a day's journey or more to the west."

"How far is that?" asked Jack, when it had been translated. The meanwhile he was closely observing DeOrr and noted the fact that although talking with the Indians, he seemed to be giving attention as well to the other group.

"About twenty-four miles, I should think," responded the Colonel. "That would be a day's journey for the Indians, but it may take us twice as long."

"Shall we start to-day?" asked Jack.

"I think we might look for some nearby game," said the Colonel, "but we will not start on the moose hunt for several days."

The object the Colonel had in his making a short trip from the camp was two-fold — In the first place he wished to convey the idea, if anyone was trailing them, that their main idea was the pursuit of game, and secondly, to break the boys in a little before setting out on a long trip — On this occasion they went but a short distance and found no large game, but shot several squirrel and pheasants, returning to the village in the early afternoon.

Once, after crossing an opening in the forest, Pepper, looking back, thought that he detected a movement in the underbrush on the far side, and that perhaps some large game would be sighted. He pointed his gun and remained a moment motionless, but nothing developed, and the matter passed from his mind.

As they came into the camp from the woods, Jack's attention was attracted by the flutter of a piece of white paper which the wind was blowing about on the edge of the encampment. His curiosity aroused by its presence in this remote Indian village, he stopped, picked it up,

and after a hasty glance, thrust it into his pocket.

"What have you got there?" asked Donald, who had noticed his action.

"Only a piece of paper," replied Jack, and the incident was speedily forgotten by the others, but when Jack was safely inside of their tent, he took the paper out and studied it carefully. It was a scrap which had been torn from a larger sheet, and showed part of a roughly drawn map of a mountainous country. At one side, partly obliterated, was a name which, with considerable difficulty, he made out to be Deane.

"I wonder where that came from," he mused; "somebody must be on the search for the mine, too. I think we will need to be on the lookout."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REAR GUARD

WHILE the adventurers under the command of Colonel Snow were advancing into the fastness of the mountain wilds, their comrades of the Patrol, through one unavoidable cause or another, had been held in unwilling check. Finally, however, they had journeyed by train to Prospect, and then on by wagon to the last known address of the advance guard.

"Well, this is a nice state of things," cried Gerald, looking about him with an air of disgust. "What are we going to do now?"

"What do you want to do?" asked Rand.

"I know what I don't want to do," replied Gerald.

"What is that?" asked Dick.

"Stay here," replied Gerald.

"Well, we can go back," returned Rand.

"Why not go on?" said Gerald.

"Where?"

"Anywhere. Why can't we go after the Colonel? Anyhow, I think they might have waited for us. I don't like being the rear guard."

"But they didn't know we were coming," said Rand. "And now we don't know which way they went. I think we might stay here for a little while, and perhaps we can find out where they have gone and then we could follow them."

The three boys, Rand, Dick and Gerald, were at the farm house of Major Carleton, from which Colonel Snow and his party had set out a few days before for the Indian village in the Rockies. When it had been found that the illness of Mr. Royce had taken such a serious turn that it was not possible that he would be able to travel for several months, the three boys decided that they would go in by themselves and join their comrades at Major Carleton's.

But, as has been stated, when they got there they found that the others had already departed, and they were now in consultation as to what was best to do.

While they were discussing the matter on the morning after their arrival, a cheery voice greeted them with a hearty:

"Good morning, boys! Glad to see you.

How do you find yourselves this glorious day?"

"Why, it's Major Carleton," shouted the boys, pleased and surprised as that gentleman came up and shook each of them by the hand.

"I am real glad to see you, don't you know!" Then addressing Dick, "So you came out to visit me after all?"

"Thank you for your welcome," replied Dick. "We are very glad to see you, but we were told that you were away."

"So I was," said the Major; "just got in this morning from a trip to the mountains, and I am going back in a day or two. I just took a run in to see how things were going. Well, what is it?" as the boys exchanged glances with one another.

"Where are you going," asked Dick, "if I may ask the question?"

"No secret about it, I'm sure," answered the Major. "I am going on a prospecting trip over beyond the Red Deer River. I hear that there are indications of gold in the mountains there."

"Would you —" began Dick, and then stopped hesitatingly.

"Upon my word, I can't tell you until I know what it is," admitted the Major.

"Would you mind taking us along with you?" blurted out Dick.

"Not a bit of it," responded the Major heartily; "I shall be delighted to have you along if you want to go."

"We came here expecting to find Colonel Snow and our companions," explained Rand, "but they got away before our arrival. We were going out to hunt for the mine, you know."

"By Jove," exclaimed Major Carleton, "I had forgotten all about the mine. I believe it is supposed to be somewhere up in that very direction, too, isn't it?"

"I don't know," answered Rand, "but I know that they were to make a start from an Indian village somewhere."

"Have you got the directions which that cipher gave about the mine?"

"No, sir," replied Rand, "we didn't keep them, but I think I can remember the most of it. There was something about three teeth—"

"And a moose trail," put in Dick.

"And a hat," added Gerald.

"That isn't very definite, is it?" said the Major.

"Let me think," began Rand. "It com-

menced like this — "Take the moose trail to —"

"The North, don't you remember," broke in Dick.

"— to the North until the three teeth are in line."

"The three teeth," mused the Major; "that must be the '*trois-dents*' of the trappers. I think I know them."

"Then west," went on Rand, "until hat covers last tooth —"

"Hah! Hah! I don't know that!" laughed the Major, "but if that is found — What then?"

"Then north to Loupe Creek to — to —"

"The Yellow Stone," finished Gerald.

"Loupe Creek and Yellow Stone. That's hardly enough to work on," said the Major, "but anyway, we will find the Colonel's party. Are you all ready for a start?"

"Now?" asked Dick.

"Not just this minute," replied the Major, "but if we are going, the sooner we get off, the better. It's a long trip, boys, and you'll have to rough it."

"How are we going?" asked Rand.

"We will travel overland," answered the Ma-

jor; "that will be the hardest but much the quickest way."

"How did Colonel Snow go?"

"He went in canoes with the Indians, I hear," replied the Major. "That is a roundabout way, and they will have a longer but easier trip. If we go straight on, we ought to get there in half the time it took them."

"And give them a surprise," said Gerald, which they did, as it turned out with greater effect than they expected.

"We will get off to-morrow," went on the Major, "so you want to get everything in readiness to-day."

It did not require much time to make needed preparations for the trip, as they were to take with them only the absolute necessities which, nevertheless, made as much of a pack as they cared to carry. When this was done, until evening, they rambled about the farm, which covered some hundreds of acres.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRAPPER TRAPPED

AFTER carefully studying the document which he had found to be sure he was correct in his surmise, Jack placed the paper carefully in his wallet, which he returned to his pocket. "I wonder if the trapper lost that," he mused. "'In my opinion,' as Don would say, I think he will stand watching."

On going out from the tent, he found the Colonel with others conversing with the very man under suspicion. Joining the group, he determined to lead the conversation in a direction that would perhaps afford some clue. It chanced that this was done for him.

"When does my brother hunt the moose?" asked Rainy Wind, addressing the Colonel.

"If the wind is right, we will go in the morning," answered the Colonel.

"So," answered Rainy Wind, "I will be ready at the rise of the sun."

"Which way do you go?" asked DeOrr in a careless tone, although Jack thought that he noticed a peculiar glint in his eye, betokening interest.

"To the west," replied Colonel Snow.

"I think there is more chance of getting some big game there. How is that, my brother?"

"It is the chance of the chase," answered Rainy Wind. "It is sometimes the west and sometimes the south, who can tell?"

"I am going down the river if I can buy a canoe," volunteered DeOrr. "Have any of the Indians a canoe they would sell?" he asked.

"White Cloud has many canoes," replied Rainy Wind. "He is skilled in the making and may sell you one."

Turning abruptly about in the Indian style, for the wild man when he has finished what he has to say, walks away without any ceremony, the trapper went off to look for White Cloud.

"Does Rainy Wind know that man?" the Colonel asked at Jack's suggestion.

"He is a stranger who has not been this way before," replied Rainy Wind. "Why does my little brother seek to learn?"

"I just wondered if he was in the habit of

trapping about here," answered Jack, adding in a lower tone, "I think he is on our trail."

"Why, what have you been doing, Jack?" asked Pepper. "Have you found out something new?"

"Only putting two and two together," replied Jack, walking away. "By the way, what is the matter with you, Pepper? I see the Indians are lighting the fires for supper, and you are generally the first to have a blaze going."

"Now, that you remind me of it, I do begin to feel as if I needed something for the inner man,—or boy. I will start the fire at once." Which he proceeded to do.

"I am going to call a council of war," announced Jack, a little later.

"What is it, my boy?" asked the Colonel.

They had finished supper, and were sitting about the fire for a short time before turning in for the night. They were comparatively alone, for the Indians were gathered about their own fire, smoking and chatting, and the trapper was nowhere in sight.

"What have you been putting together now?"

"I picked up a scrap of paper to-day that had part of a map showing three peaks and, also, the

name Deane on it," replied Jack. "I think that Mr. DeOrr lost it and that *we* are the game *he* is trying to trap."

"In my opinion," said Donald, "ye are no sure of it."

"That reminds me," put in Pepper; "I believe someone was following us yesterday," and he related the incident he had deemed suspicious.

"I shouldn't be surprised," remarked the Colonel, after a little pause, "if you were right, Jack. I have had doubts about the man, though I couldn't tell why."

"What shall we do now," asked Pepper, "go on?"

"Of course," answered Jack, "only we will turn it about and set a trap for him."

"How will you do that?" asked Pepper.

"Why we can go on and see if he follows us."

"How will we know if he is following us?" asked Donald. "He may be going the same way we are, anyway."

"That is easily arranged," said the Colonel, who had been listening very quietly to the boys' talk. "I think that Jack's suggestion is a good one, so to-morrow, I will announce that instead of going to the west, we have decided to try the

south, and that we will hunt in that direction."

"But we are not going back," demurred Pepper, "without trying to find the mine?"

"No," replied the Colonel. "If we are not followed we merely make a detour and strike in on the trail a bit later."

"And if we are followed?" asked Jack.

"Then we will try and elude him, but it is time to be off to bed for we are going to make an early start in the morning."

On the morrow, the Colonel having in a measure, taken the Indian chief into his confidence, he announced the change of plan and immediately after breakfast, the tent was struck, their packs made up, and with Rainy Wind and Lone Dog as guides, they set out on the trail to the south.

For a full hour they kept on to the direction taken. The travel so far had been easy, but during the next half hour they encountered rough and broken country. There were ravines accompanied with abrupt and inaccessible sides. They paused occasionally, ostensibly to rest, but really to cautiously look back.

"Seen any signs indicating that anyone is trailing us?" asked Pepper on one of these occasions.

"No," replied the Colonel; "perhaps we have been mistaken, or thrown him off the track if he was watching us. I think we might make a detour now."

Their course was changed to the west and they made about the same distance as they had already accomplished, then they halted for dinner.

The day became heavily overcast and a storm was impending. It seemed wise, therefore, to encamp where they were and prepare to stay the night. The tent was erected, and everything prepared for the swiftly oncoming war of the elements. Such flashes of lightning and such peals of thunder, such tempestuous rushing of the winds. It was an experience to be long remembered.

In the morning, Rainy Wind announced that there had been someone about. He had felt their presence in the night.

"That's what I told you," exclaimed Jack. "Now we want to catch him."

"How are you going to do that?" asked Donald.

"Why some of us will go on, and the others can hide in a suitable ambush, and capture him when he comes along," exclaimed Jack.

"But he may not come that way," objected Donald.

"He will follow the track, won't he?" responded Jack. "You can go on, and Pepper and I will lay in wait for him."

"That is too dangerous for you," objected the Colonel. "I think the better way will be for us all to go on for a mile or two and then seek out an ambush as Jack says, and see what happens."

As this was obviously the better plan, as soon as breakfast was over, the tent was struck and the entire party went on for about three miles. Here their route led them up the narrow edge of a cliff, from the top of which there was a commanding view, a deep canyon on one side and an almost impenetrable thicket on the other. Anyone following their trail must necessarily expose himself to observation, while the onlookers could be absolutely hidden.

It seemed for a time that the precautions were unnecessary, and only Jack and Rainy Wind were on guard, the others, reluctant to waste time, and invigorated by the glorious air of the morning following the storm, had gone further on.

Jack was just beginning to wonder if his suspicions were justified when a half mile away, the

figure of a man appeared following the path that they earlier had taken.

It was plain that he was an expert woodsman, as he moved along the trail they had made, scarcely pausing as he went, yet noting everything as he proceeded. He had come more than half the distance to their hiding place when he suddenly stopped, glanced sharply ahead and, perhaps seeing or hearing something, turned and walked back along the way he had come.

"After him!" shouted Jack, when the man turned back. "We must find out who it is." The Indian, of course, did not know what was said, but recognized it as an order and started at once in pursuit. The Colonel and the others heard the call and followed less rapidly.

The man, immediately conscious of what had happened, started on a run and, increasing his speed to the utmost, darted to the left in the direction of a small ravine, which lay between encompassing rocky banks. He was carrying quite a heavy pack, but ran as easily as though unburdened. He readily distanced Jack, but not the Indian, who was gaining with every stride, and was not far behind him when he reached the margin of the cliff. Here he paused for a mo-

ment as he started to make the descent; then he appeared to lose his footing and to ineffectually struggle for an instant before he toppled over into the depth below, dropping the pack as he went.

"He is killed," called Rainy Wind, as he ran on to the place.

When Jack had reached the edge of the bank, the man was nowhere to be seen. There was an almost sheer descent to the stream which rushed through the embracing rock some sixty feet below. The rapidly moving current had carried his body with it.

"Goodness," exclaimed Pepper, who now joined Donald and Jack, "that was awful, wasn't it? Did you find out who it was?"

"No," replied Jack.

But at this moment a shout from the Indian, who by a circuitous route had gone down to the stream, announced the discovery of the man. Hurrying to the spot with the Colonel, who had joined them, they found that the man was not only not dead, but not even dangerously wounded. With the knowledge gained by his years of experience in his trade, the trapper, when he found himself going, had relaxed his muscles, and fallen limp into the stream and had been carried along unhurt, sustaining no serious injury.

CHAPTER XX

WHO WINS?—CONCLUSION

IT was DeOrr, plainly enough, as they had suspected.

He was lying unconscious upon the ground where the Indian had laid him. A hasty examination showed that except for one of the smaller bones of the leg, which was probably broken, he was not injured. After the broken bone had been set and bandaged by Colonel Snow, the man, who had now regained consciousness, was put on a litter, which the boys, under the Colonel's directions, had made from the branches of trees, and was carried by the Indians by an easy ascent to the top of the bank. Here a halt was made while the boys went for their packs.

DeOrr would offer no explanation for his actions, and as he was now unable to work any underhanded scheme in his own or other interests, the Colonel contented himself with sending the injured man back to the camp. This task the In-

dians undertook, promising to join the party again the following day. This programme was carried out, and again the search for the mine was on.

"Here," said Rainy Wind, near the close of the second afternoon, stopping at a pass in the mountains that led away to the north; "here is the path of the moose."

"Crickets," cried Pepper, "is this the trail? It looks more like a goat track than a moose trail."

"In my opinion," remarked Donald, as he looked at the almost imperceptible path that wound among the rocks, and along the side of the mountain, "'tis nothing much to brag about."

Although it was almost dark, the party decided to push on, but after a half mile of rough traveling, on coming to a small plateau, they went into camp for the night.

"Now that we have found the trail, I wonder if we can find the teeth," remarked Pepper the next morning when they were about to set out.

"It must be farther up the trail," said the Colonel, "and some distance to one side, I judge, for the directions say 'until they are in line.' Keep a bright lookout, boys, for we don't want to go by them."

But hour after hour passed and no peaks which would seem to answer the description came into view, and it was not until the middle of the afternoon when they were wearily plodding along that Pepper suddenly gave an exultant shout.

"Hurrah!" he cried, "there they are."

"Where? What?" demanded Jack and Donald in a breath.

"There! There!" returned Pepper, pointing off to the south, where a single, slender peak, like an animal's tooth, rose against the sky.

"But that is only one," demurred Jack.

"Well, one is better than none, anyhow," retorted Pepper, "and look! there is another," when a second peak was made out in the distance.

"And there is the third one!" cried Jack, a moment later, when still another came into sight.

Forgetting their fatigue, the boys pushed eagerly on, until they had come to a place where the three peaks were in line.

"Now west," said Jack, "until 'hat' hides last tooth. But I don't see how we are going to do that unless we get wings," looking up at the mountain to the west, which rose sheer for several hundred feet.

"Perhaps there is an opening somewhere that we can follow," suggested the Colonel, but a search for some distance up and down the trail revealed no way over the mountain.

"The only thing to do," decided the Colonel at length, "is to keep on up the trail until we find a way, as long as the peaks are in view and we cannot go far astray."

The journey up the trail was resumed, but it was not until another mile had been traversed that a break was found through which they could pass to the west. The tooth-like peaks were now lost in the mist of evening, it was the shut of dark, and encampment was made until morning, when they could be again located.

In the bright light of the new day the slender peaks were clearly revealed against the eastern sky, and an early start was made.

"I wonder where the *hat* is?" said Pepper, when they had traveled for several miles and the peaks were less distinctly visible, one, the most distant, having disappeared from view. "If it doesn't come pretty soon, there won't be anything to hide."

But while he was speaking they came to a turn in the pass they were traversing and a projection

of the mountain, which bore a rude resemblance to a hat, shut out the nearest peak from view.

"Hurrah!" cried Pepper, "there goes the last tooth. We must be pretty near there."

"How about the directions? Which way now?" asked the Colonel.

"North to Loupe Cr  ek," replied Jack. "That can't be very far. This must be the way."

Extending from the canyon they were following, was a smaller ravine, which ran to the north, into which they turned. It was thickly strewn with rocks and boulders, that made the way exceedingly toilsome and, at places, almost impassable. They overcame all difficulties, however, and finally emerged upon a high plateau.

"Now which way?" asked Pepper.

"North still," answered Jack.

"North!" repeated Pepper. "What are we looking for, the North Pole?"

"Oh, there is plenty of space yet, before we get there," answered Jack. "There is only one more turn, I think."

"Keep a-goin' then," returned Pepper, "or I'll begin to think 'there ain't no sich thing.'"

The plateau was of no great extent, and they soon came to the northern boundary. Here a

short search revealed a canyon running to the west, down which they descended to lower ground.

“Now for Loupe Creek and then —”

“What?” asked Donald.

“The Uncas Mine.”

The way down the canyon was difficult and progress was slow, so that it was dark in the shadow of the mountains when they reached the lower ground between the hills. But there were no signs of a creek to be found and it was with a keener sense of disappointment than they had heretofore experienced that they made their camp that night. In the morning the search for the creek was resumed, but without success. There were no signs of any water except for a few springs that bubbled from the sides of the hills. Neither of the Indians were familiar with the country, nor had they ever heard of Loupe Creek.

“I am afraid,” said the Colonel at last, when the matter had been thoroughly discussed, “we shall have to go back. We are on the wrong track somewhere.”

“S-s-say,” broke in Pepper, excitedly, “I-look there!”

"What is it now, Pepper?" demanded Donald.

"L-l-look there!" repeated Pepper. "The Yellow S-S-Stone!"

And away in the distance up the canyon was a mass of rocks which, as it caught the rays of the sun, glittered like gold.

"Hurrah!" cried Donald and Jack, waving their caps, to the no small amazement of the Indians, "you are a whole outfit, Pepper."

Their fatigue forgotten in the joy of the discovery, the boys pushed forward in the direction of the yellow rock at a pace equaling that of the guides.

They had gained the top of a small declivity looking down on the base of the rock when Pepper, who was in the lead, suddenly stopped.

"L-l-look t-t-there!" he cried.

"What is it?" called Jack, hurrying up. "Well, that is hard luck," he exclaimed.

Before them, at the base of the yellow stone which they had traveled so far to find, was a tent and, moving about among the rocks were several people.

"What is the matter?" asked the Colonel, who had now joined them.

"There is someone there ahead of us," replied Jack in a disconsolate tone.

"Umph!" said the Colonel, "it's the fortune of war. We are a little too late, that is all."

"All!" echoed Pepper. "I should think it was all, and I suppose that all we can do now is to go back."

"I wonder if Rae got in ahead of us after all," remarked Jack.

"I think we might go down and see," said the Colonel quietly; "perhaps they haven't found the mine and we may have a chance yet."

"Do you think so?" cried the boys. "Let's hurry down then."

"Better go slowly," advised the Colonel, "or they may think we are trying to rush them."

Cautiously they made their way toward the camp. They had come almost within hailing distance apparently without having been noticed, when one of the figures rose from the rocks and started towards them with a shout, followed by the Uncas call, which brought the others quickly after him.

"W-w-why," stammered Pepper, "it's Gerald. How in the world did he get here?"

"We stole a march on you that time," said Ma-

jor Carleton, a few minutes later, when he and Colonel Snow met.

"I should think you did," replied the Colonel.
"But how did you get here?"

"That's what we all want to know," cried the boys.

"Oh, we just came by a short cut across the country. I know this region fairly well," replied the Major. "We thought we would find you here, but it seems we got ahead of you. However, the mine is here and waiting for you."

So the search was happily ended.

"Now that the mine is found, what will you boys do if it earns you a fortune?" asked the Colonel.

"Build an air-ship," cried Pepper. "I wish we had one now to take us home."

What was really done, if the reader wishes to know will be found related in "The Boy Scouts' Air-craft."

While talking, they had continued on to where the Major and his party had made camp. Here the boys set up their tent, to an accompaniment of talk, as the boys went over their adventures since they parted in Winnipeg.

THE END

